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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

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FRANKFURT
BOOK FAIR 1S. S. Praver on Robert Musil
Maigret and his maker

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Exactitude with ecstasy

S. S. Prawer

ROBERT MUSIL

Briefe 1901-1942
Volume One: Text. 1485pp.
3498 04260 6
Volume Two: Commentary and
Indexes. 848pp.
3498 04270 X
Edited by Adolf Frisé
Reinbek: Rowohlt

Musil was not a man for baring his soul to all and sundry; but his letters retain their interest as personal documents because from the very beginning they appear related, like almost everything else he did, to his literary work. His studies, his reading, the rhythm of his life, were increasingly geared to the task of producing one great novel. After a floridian's post he held for a time was abolished and he was made redundant, he abandoned all thoughts of making his living in some bourgeois occupation. If Rilke could live for his literary work alone, so could he. But his modest family fortune disappeared in the inflation, and he exhibited none of Rilke's talent for securing the patronage of rich and titled ladies. Reading the letters made available in this new edition one comes to realize to how great an extent Ulrich, the hero of *The Man Without Qualities*, represents his author's fondest dream: Ulrich has the means to take a holiday from life in the material comfort which Musil himself, in the later years of his existence, so conspicuously lacked. The letters show clearly how much worse their writer's position became after the advent of Hitler forced him, first out of Germany, and then, after the Anschluss, out of his native Austria too. This proud and upright man, whose decision to leave Hitler's Reich was dictated by disgust at cruelty and vulgarity (what a key-letter of June 11, 1933 calls "nackte Hässlichkeit") and not simply by loyalty to his Jewish-born wife, was forced, in his later years in Switzerland, to live almost entirely on charity. We see him carrying on his work, or trying to do so in face of increasing ill-health and nervous prostration, in an atmosphere of uncertainty in which, sometimes, he literally did not know where his next meal was coming from or where he might find a quiet room and bed. The letters and commentaries allow us to see that he was, in fact, helped by many individuals who were themselves anything but rich; the Foundations and Corporations whom he approached

with requests for Fellowships or Bursaries after his emigration usually turned him down. Musil's devotion to his work was loyal and protectively (over-protectively sometimes) furthered by his wife. The cares of their daily life together devolved mainly upon her, and it was she who wrote to various correspondents (including a daughter from an earlier marriage) about their struggles, about everything, in fact, which was not directly related to her husband's literary work. Adolf Frisé therefore decided to reprint her letters as well as Musil's; and this decision proves a wise one, for only in combination do these letters give us a complete picture of the Musils' day-to-day existence. Frisé also includes, in his volume of text, letters from other correspondents - among them Hauptmann, Hofmannsthal, Döblin, Thomas Mann and Efraim Frisch, who - concerned themselves with Musil's affairs and tried to help him in various ways. In this way Musil's own letters are placed in their context and, on occasions, corrected and "relativized" even before the reader turns to the Commentary volume. Such placing is often necessary: the generous letters which we see Thomas Mann, for instance, writing to others on Musil's behalf show Mann in a much better light than Musil's often acid comments about him would lead one to expect. Musil is equally unfair to his publisher Gottfried Bermann Fischer - but given the nature of his work and the business of its progress, his relations with publishers were bound to be uneasy. This goes for Ernst Rowohlt too, and much amusement can be derived from reading Musil's less than flattering remarks about him in volumes published under the imprint of the house that Rowohlt built. Reading these letters makes one appreciate the point of view of those who argue that Musil would have done better if he had not allowed *The Man Without Qualities* to come out in instalments; he should, rather, have made every effort to complete his novel - as he did his earlier writings - before authorizing publication of any part of it. The published portions seem to have hampered him because they were out there, in the world, being read. Frisé appears to have clamped his characters into fixed positions, and that impeded his invention in ways the nineteenth-century masters of serial publication would not have understood. And so he went on and on,

revising, discarding, resurrecting, discarding again, revising again, with increasing spells of deep depression and inability to work, falling dead at last, in his sixty-second year, in the midst of a mass of papers and drafts which only the devoted labours of a generation of editors - Adolf Frisé foremost among them - has been able to reduce to some sort of order. Yet, paradoxically enough, this incompleteness has proved an essential part of the appeal that *The Man Without Qualities* has for many of its readers. There is a special fascination that comes from a work its author left unfinished - from a fragment that impels our thought and fantasy in a certain direction but circumscribes or limits them less than a fully rounded work would do. The German Romantics, masters of the fragment, knew about this appeal; and it seems strangely appropriate that Musil's novel has taken its place alongside Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* among the most admired and cherished unfinished works of German literature. Much of the activity of writing, deleting and revising which is evoked by Musil's letters and fully documented in Frisé's edition of his Collected Works might nowadays be described as "deconstruction". The "gesture of turning reason against itself, to bring out its tacit dependence on another, repressed and unrecognized, level of meaning", described in Christopher Norris's recent book *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (reviewed in the *TLS*, July 9) is one that becomes very familiar to readers of Robert Musil; and the dangers of re-emptive closure and conceptual rigidity, against which our modern deconstructors so often warn us, are at the heart of *The Man Without Qualities* - they are part, indeed, of its central theme, the theme André Gide isolated when he offered the phrase "l'homme disponible" as an adequate equivalent of "Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften". If ever there was a work that demands, to use Norris's formulation again, "paradoxical 'double readings', intended to show how novels display their own artifice even when exploiting the realist mode", it is Musil's unfinished masterpiece. If ever an author takes on the role of deconstructor of his own writings, it is Musil: the Musil whom we can watch, in his letters and in the variant readings assembled in Frisé's edition of *The Man Without Qualities*, struggling with his fiction in draft after draft, undoing closure again and again.

Despite the interest attaching to the later letters from Switzerland, lovers of Musil's novels and plays, and literary theorists and critics, will find more to engage them in letters written before the Swiss years; before sickness, worry, poverty and growing disenchantment with the very act of narrating took their toll. Future writers on the German *Novelle*, for instance, will have to take into account what Musil says about the special fitness of this genre for the depiction of inwardness, in a series of letters written to Franz Blei in 1911. Future writers on theories of Tragedy in the twentieth century will do well to ponder what Musil has to say on this subject in an epistle addressed to Matthias di Gaspero. And readers of Frisé's earlier editions of Musil's fragments and diaries will not be surprised to find him again and again commenting intelligently and sardonically on cultural and socio-political affairs. In his later letters he had to be very sparing with such comments; he never knew into what hands his missives might fall. The most valuable passages to be found in the earlier pages of these volumes, however, are those which afford us insights into the young writer's work-processes, his ways of reading, his search for what previous ages would have called "inspiration". A typical example presents itself in the first of three letters to a lady whose salon Musil had attended while doing a spell of soldiering in the district around Graz. At least we think the letter was addressed to her: only the draft has been found, and that does not reveal the name of the addressee. It can be dated, however, between May 31 and June 2, 1902, and that makes Mme Stefanie Tyka the most likely recipient. The letter speaks of Musil's struggles "zwischen ihm und verlängertem Mark"; struggles, that is, between the rational and instinctive parts of his nature - to which must be added, as he goes on to say, struggles between the delight in rational observation and speculation (natural to a student of engineering and philosophy) and a more "lyrical" impulse (no less natural in an admirer of Rilke). He then describes his peculiar way of reading at this time: not great gulps, but taking in one sentence at a time, then stepping to the window with something in his hand - a piece of paper, perhaps, or a box of matches - and staring out for sometimes ten, twenty minutes, before

returning to his book. His organism, he writes, seemed to demand that cumbersome procedure. Was it some congenital weakness, was it male hysteria (Freud and Breuer, it seems, had not written in vain!), or was there some profound hidden purpose in such peremptory demands? He then goes on to describe the contrasting moods in which he finds himself at this period: not moods, perhaps ("Stimmung ist wohl nicht das richtige Wort"), but something more imperious and pervasive - a complex of opinions, hopes, endeavours all opening a prospect onto a path he felt impelled to follow because he sensed that it would lead him to a desirable goal - to his goal. To step onto such a path, he explains to his correspondent, implied total dedication and commitment; not only the rational self but the whole person, the man of flesh and blood as well as the man of reason, was involved. Even art could become a means of exalting the self in ways that could make the very notion of the individual "person" interchangeable with that of "sensitivity" in its widest sense - "Sinnlichkeit im weitesten Begriffe." He felt this state of sensual exaltation to be connected with his vocation for art; yet when the experience was upon him he tended - shades of Werther! - to lie back without troubling to write anything down, giving himself up to what he calls "Selbstverrichtung", self-annihilation. Musil knew, of course, that artistic creation meant work and clear-sighted planning; but he also knew that the "spell" he tried to describe in his letter was necessary to him. He would therefore induce such experiences by auto-suggestion or (as he ominously adds) by some other means. When he came out of his trance-like states he would retain a feeling that something obscure but essential, something he needed but also something beyond comprehension, had enriched his life. One thing he did comprehend, however, one thing certainly he did bring back from these excursions: the certainty that the work he had to do would require tremendous concentration. "And since I lacked this," he added, with wry self-regard, "I did no work at all, and I don't regard this as too great a loss."

It is easy to see the origin of a good deal of this in Nietzsche and in Rilke; but that does not devalue the insights it affords us into the sensibility of the young writer who was about to launch *The Confusions of Young Törless* into

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the world. It takes us, in fact, well beyond *Törless* - for here we see already Musil's drive towards combining intellectual and spiritual "exactitude" with a secular analogy of mystical ecstasy which he was to call "der andere Zustand", the "other state", in *The Man Without Qualities*. This early letter even looks forward to, and partly explains, the inability to sustain the tremendous concentration necessary, and the consequent inability to produce a finished work, which so distressed the author in his last years. He did not relish the writings of Thomas Mann, but there is one sentence by Mann which he quotes in his letters with entire approval: the sentence which defines the writer as a man who finds writing more difficult than other people.

The interest which attaches to this first letter to Stefanie Tyrka attaches also to the two other drafts intended for this same correspondent. The one dated March 22, 1905 contains a valuable analysis of what Musil had tried to achieve in *Young Törless* and in what respects this novel had fallen short of his own artistic ideal. From the first, we see the dissatisfaction with his published work goes hand in hand with a strong sense of his own worth as a writer. The novel he tells Tyrka would not be taken for a sensitive psychological study of sensitive possible characters. He would like to have presented "psychological lines of gravity" ("Schwerlinien") with the help of deliberately constructed figures of whom readers would ask, not: "is this man consistent?" but rather: "is this man consistent?" If he could have achieved consistency of this kind, he adds, "impossibility" of his imagined figures would have made him value them even more. Here, once again, we look beyond *Törless* to the later portions of *The Man Without Qualities*.

No one can read these letters without feeling deeply, how committedly Musil was, despite his clear-eyed vision of the weaknesses and wickednesses of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire and its post-1918 successor. From these volumes we can gain, for the first time, a full picture of this great Austrian's endeavour, throughout the years he spent in Switzerland, not to see himself, and not to allow others to see him, as an emigrant, a refugee or an exile. Even after the Second World War, broken out he kept up the fiction that it was only the precarious state of his health which kept him from returning to his native country. Despite his poverty, somehow organized funds to pay the rent on his flat in Vienna, hoping to go back to his desk and his old papers once the barbarians had been driven beyond the gates. He fought strenuously, with the help of lawyers who could not have hoped for fees, to keep the Viennese city authorities from requisitioning his flat. His efforts proved vain, in the end, and the consequent agitation no doubt hastened his death.

The letters also show his struggles to keep his published work before his Austrian and German readership - only to find that despite his impeccably "Aryan" ancestry (of which he had several times been required to furnish proof) the published portions of *The Man Without Qualities* and the characteristically titled *Requiem Works in My Lifetime* were placed on the Nazi black list. Unsold copies simply disappeared from the publishers' warehouses as well as the bookshops. What public was struggling so hard to address? Who would read his works if they were barred from Austria and Germany? Among German-speaking Europeans, only the Swiss were free to buy and peruse his writings - and they seemed to take little interest in them, even though he was occasionally asked to read from his works to some literary society or other. Even Pastor Lejeune and his family, who again and again helped and sustained Musil during their time in Switzerland, did so from humanitarian motives without any real understanding of their protégé's literary achievement. The USA, where Thomas Mann and Hermann Broch had been received with open arms, did not seem eager to welcome Musil in the same way. Though there was at least one American, Henry Hall, who, while in Vienna, took an interest in Musil's writing, and his wife, who had been a friend of his in the days of his youth, did not seem to have understood him.

sympathy which translated themselves, whenever possible, into financial help.

In England too Musil was all but unknown in his life-time, though his letters refer with pride to reviews of his writings that appeared, in the 1930s, in the *Times Literary Supplement*. He was also sent a copy of *German Life and Letters* in which one of his prose-pieces appeared in a translation by Horace Campion, with an accompanying appreciation from the pen of Professor L. A. Willoughby which linked Musil's name to those of Proust and Joyce. Writing in 1937-8, Willoughby added: "Musil's intellectualism, needless to say, does not meet with approval in modern Germany where it is deemed as 'an escape from the organic.' But we in England can still enjoy the metaphysical abstractions and psychological dissections of this brilliant Austrian without feeling that the foundations of the state are thereby imperilled. . . . There is no translation into English."

This last sentence, describing the state of affairs that Horace Campion was attempting to remedy, raises a question. In a letter to Klaus Pinkus dated March 15, 1934 we find Musil referring to help he had received from "some English friends, notably my translator Gullick". A rapid search through the relevant bibliographies has failed to turn up any published translation of Musil's works from the pen of Norman Gullick. Had Musil perhaps been given to understand that Gullick was the anonymous reviewer who had discussed Volume I of *The Man Without Qualities* in the *TLS* of November 19 1931? Had Gullick bronched the possibility of translating that novel in a letter to Musil which has been lost or has escaped Professor Frisé's vigilance? Perhaps some reader of this review holds the solution to the puzzle.

Musil was not a man who dashed his thoughts down onto paper like an undisciplined rush; his letters, like his other writings, are carefully composed German prose, whose pellucid construction, rhythmic subtlety and euphony serve the expression of frequently complex thoughts and feelings. Again and again Musil surprises and delights his correspondents with apt images. To Franz Blei he writes about his struggles to make his written words conform to his vision: "Do you know, I constantly have the feeling that it may only look as though deep down in the waters of my forgotten self - the self that has vanished from view - some city of coral were growing upwards. What is it that will come to the surface in the end?"

Won't it just be an old box of bricks?" To another correspondent he complains of the physical weakness that is preventing him from getting on with his writing; he feels tortured, he explains, "by this stupidity of the body, which rebels against its rider like a horse that refuses to cross a bridge". A little later he suggests some of the qualities he would like to see in a publisher's proof-reader by calling him a "Prussian language-traffic policeman" ("preussischer Sprachverkehrsbeamter"). Most characteristic of all, perhaps, is this paragraph from a letter to Rolf Langnese dated January 20, 1942: the last year, that is, of Musil's life.

Imagine a buffalo whose mighty horns have been replaced by another skin-formation: by two ridiculously sensitive corns. This creature, with its powerful forehead that formerly bore weapons but now has corns instead, stands for the man in exile. If he has been a king, he will talk of the crown he once wore, feeling all the while that those who hear him doubt whether it was even a hat. In the end he himself comes to question whether he still has a head on his shoulders. This situation is sad, but almost equally ridiculous - and that makes it doubly sad.

Not since Heine have the degradations and humiliations of exile been so powerfully expressed in the German language.

One could go on and on quoting such memorable felicities, which are either entirely original (like the language-traffic policeman and the buffalo with corns) or variations on traditional images (like the Platonic body-horse that rebels against its spirit-rider). The clarity of these letters, their ability to convey shades of meaning exactly and wittily, appear wrested from silence by a man ever conscious, as he says in an early letter to Johannes von Allesch, of the feeling that there are boundary situations in which words are of no avail:

Zu sagen ist nichts vor diesen stumm huzumehenden Dingen, aber da es doch eben Dinge sind, die einen an die äusserste Grenze führen, mag es vielleicht gut sein, zu spüren, dass man nicht allein ist. . . .

It is Musil's own striving for precision of thought and utterance which lends force and weight to his dismissal of Spengler's *Decline of the West* at a time when others were bowled over by the latter's breadth of reference and supposed erudition: "To attempt a factual refutation would be a task without end. He throws false

analogies about with such abandon that the little truth which is to be found in his work comes inextricably tangled in a skein of error." Hofmannsthal, as so often, hit the nail on the head when he commended Musil, in a letter he wrote to Otto von Gemmingen in 1926, as an usually intelligent man who had his own view of all things and knew how to find splendid formulations for such views: "ein so ungewöhnlich gescheiter Mensch, der zu allen Dingen eigene Ansichten hat und sie ausgezeichnet formuliert."

Let us look, in conclusion, at a letter in which we find Musil sitting down to answer, in January 1931, a somewhat precious but astutely questioning letter from a young scholar who had been reading the recently published first part of *The Man Without Qualities*. In this reply Musil is at pains to stress that he had never followed the fashion of regarding the intellect as the enemy of feeling; intellect and feeling are brothers, though (as happens in families) they are often estranged. The word "semi-mental" should be given back the dignity it had had in an earlier, Romantic period; its two parts bring together what should never have been dissociated. What, then, is meant by a "Mann ohne Eigenschaften", a man without "qualities" or "characteristics"? He is one who helps, Musil explains, to overcome dissociation by refusing premature closure; he allows diverse elements, the best elements of his time that have not achieved synthesis, to come together in him. "Ein Mann, der möglichst viele der besten, aber nirgends zur Synthese gelangten Zeitelemente in sich vereint." How adequate this description is to what the author actually shows us of his hero in the unfinished novel need not concern us here. What we should note, rather, is that the name of the young scholar who elicited this explanation was Adolf Frisé. Little did Musil know that this would be the man who would dedicate his life to the task of bringing his work before the public in as full and authentic a form as was humanly possible. The latest and last fruit of his dedication is now before us; and like Frisé's other editions it will be eagerly used by generations of readers.

This is not to say, however, that no revision is necessary. Further letters will come to light, and some of those who refused to co-operate with Frisé may have a change of heart and allow the full text of their holdings to be published. It is quite obvious, moreover, that despite inserted errata slips all is not well with some of the text in English. We find "handsight" instead of "hindsight", "tought"

which should not be allowed to distract us from appreciation of the considerable achievement the edition represents. The appearance of these two weighty volumes is a cause for congratulation and celebration. They mark the final stage in Adolf Frisé's labours in the service of an author whose major work was left unfinished when he died, unexpectedly, exactly forty years ago. It has been the labour of a life time, and has posed editorial problems of a complexity exceeded only by those which faced the editors of Hölderlin's posthumous papers. Editing the letters demanded skills different from those required for assessing the degree of weight to be given to competing drafts of *The Man Without Qualities*; skills which included the gathering of an immense amount of information to elucidate Musil's cryptic references and to penetrate the disguises he and his correspondents had to assume in order to deceive the malevolent eyes of Nazi censors or other officials. Diplomacy was necessary too: many important documents are owned by private collectors, some of whom proved less than helpful when they were requested, often many times, to make the text of their holdings available. Some letters, known to be still extant, have remained inaccessible; but several of these are represented by quotations, and other details from auctioneers' catalogues. Most helpful of all was Musil's habit of making careful drafts of his letters before sending final copies to their intended recipients. This meant that even when Musil's correspondents had thrown the precious originals away, their content could be recovered from one, two or even three drafts preserved first by Musil himself and then by his widow.

It is not only Musil who is indebted to the scholar whose letter he answered so fully and courteously in 1931. After his struggles with formidable textual and organizational difficulties, and after weathering the stormy controversies his endeavours now seemed to attract, Adolf Frisé has now just assured of gratitude and esteem from the ever-increasing community of those who hear, in the writings he has made available, one of the voices that would lead us to the twentieth-century Europe.

AUSTRIAN LITERATURE



Lieutenant Robert Musil in 1901.

instead of "taught", "husband" instead of "husband", "French" instead of "French" to say nothing of such gibberish as the following attributed to Barbara Church: "I have no letters, my husband did not know any after have answered those he was interested in." Patient scrutiny and comparison with the originals seem to do well to eliminate unnecessary repetition: on page 689 of the Commentary volume the same quotation occurs twice in the space of a dozen lines.

These are teething-troubles; they should not be allowed to distract us from appreciation of the considerable achievement the edition represents. The appearance of these two weighty volumes is a cause for congratulation and celebration. They mark the final stage in Adolf Frisé's labours in the service of an author whose major work was left unfinished when he died, unexpectedly, exactly forty years ago. It has been the labour of a life time, and has posed editorial problems of a complexity exceeded only by those which faced the editors of Hölderlin's posthumous papers. Editing the letters demanded skills different from those required for assessing the degree of weight to be given to competing drafts of *The Man Without Qualities*; skills which included the gathering of an immense amount of information to elucidate Musil's cryptic references and to penetrate the disguises he and his correspondents had to assume in order to deceive the malevolent eyes of Nazi censors or other officials. Diplomacy was necessary too: many important documents are owned by private collectors, some of whom proved less than helpful when they were requested, often many times, to make the text of their holdings available. Some letters, known to be still extant, have remained inaccessible; but several of these are represented by quotations, and other details from auctioneers' catalogues. Most helpful of all was Musil's habit of making careful drafts of his letters before sending final copies to their intended recipients. This meant that even when Musil's correspondents had thrown the precious originals away, their content could be recovered from one, two or even three drafts preserved first by Musil himself and then by his widow.

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RUSSIAN LITERATURE

The urge to survive

Dan Jacobson

ELLIOTT MOSSMAN (Editor)

The Correspondence of Boris Pasternak and Olga Freidenberg 1910-1954

365pp. Secker and Warburg. £15. 0 436 28855 9

This book is a more complicated affair than its title perhaps suggests. It is in fact a kind of montage or palimpsest: it contains not only the letters exchanged over more than forty years between Boris Pasternak and his cousin Olga Freidenberg, but also linking and explanatory passages from what is called a "retrospective diary" by Olga Freidenberg. This is evidently an autobiographical account of some of the major phases of her life: it presumably incorporates material from contemporary diaries. The editor of the letters also provides us with a general introduction, as well as shorter introductions to each of the sections into which the book is divided. Finally, the book includes about fifty pages of photographs of various generations of Pasternaks and Freidenbergs, and their joint family connections. Like the snapshots in everyone else's family album, these are touching and amusing; like those in any other album, they make us feel almost nothing else can just how inescapable is the passage of time. The false roses piled preposterously high on a hat worn by Olga Freidenberg; the real leaves of the hedgerow in front of which the middle-aged, shirt-sleeved poet stands; her strained smile at nothing in particular; his sulkily equine good looks - everything, like the uncles and aunts and the dog-carts in which they sit or the flights of steps on which they are artfully disposed, is ultimately as perishable as everything else.

Another complication within the book relates not just to its structure but to the character of one of its authors. Olga Freidenberg conscientiously kept the letters written to her by her cousin; considering the promise of his youth and the achievement of his maturity, this is perhaps unremarkable in itself. She also made and kept drafts or copies of her letters to him - which seems to me quite another kettle of fish, psychologically speaking. The editor remarks in his introduction that the compilation differs from most collections of letters in being a two-way affair; he does not, however, appear to be struck by the oddity of his heroine's practice, sustained over decades, of carefully making and preserving copies of what are in some cases virtually love-letters to her cousin, or what purport to be whimsical effusions or angry expostulations to him.

One cannot but associate the self-consciousness this practice reveals with the writer's inclination or ambition to see herself, and to write about herself, as if she were the heroine of an unfolding novel or drama. Haughty, impetuous, passionate, mysterious, something between Tolstoy's Natasha and Rostov and Chekhov's Nina in *The Seagull*; that seems to be the style she is looking for, especially in the earlier letters. "If only autumn comes quickly, my beloved autumn! I shall go away, I shall save myself from myself." "Some people have been way-stations for me; I saw them from a distance, knew that they were still far away, and that I would not overtake them soon. . . . After straining forward with all my might, after an unbelievable concentration of will, I discovered I had sped past them without even stopping. Then an ineffable sadness seized me." And so forth. Not only, characteristic of her, but also a consequence of her political exile, which may have been strengthened by the political exigencies of the time, but which cannot be thought of simply as a response to them.

It is not a state of mind which makes for lively letters; or even, sometimes, for comprehensible ones. There are passages in this book when one knows that Pasternak is talking eloquently about himself, but does not know what he is saying; one begins to suspect that the function of the eloquence is to achieve that very effect. Conversely, there are a few occasions when the poet's self-absorption leads him to almost Dickensian or Dostoyevskian heights of unwittingly comic self-revelation.

Well, in the end her life did turn out to be a heroic and tragic one; or at least to contain heroic and tragic elements. She became the first woman to hold a chair in her university; the scholarly work to which she had devoted many years of toil was banned by the Soviet authorities three weeks after its publication; she then had to survive the purges, despite the quadruple intelligibility of her position: as an intellectual, a woman, a Jew, and an academic whose children had been killed in the war.

philology and linguistics) was one in which Stalin himself claimed a measure of special expertise: she fought, unsuccessfully, to save "certain" life, after he had been taken away to Siberia; living alone with her aged mother, she endured the siege of Leningrad from its beginning to end. At one point she writes to Pasternak of how, during the German bombardments of the city, she lay in bed thinking about "realism in ancient literature" and the "history of folklore". Perhaps it is there that the reader comes closest to understanding just how much her capacity for self-dramatization actually helped her to achieve what she achieved and to endure what she endured.

They make a strange pair, these cousins: he the flighty poet and man of genius, writing from Moscow; she the literary intellectual and scholar in St Petersburg/Leningrad, who feels indignantly impelled to point out to him, since he shows himself insufficiently appreciative of the fact, that her life "is already a biography. . . . [It] has acquired artistic value. . . . become part of an epic". In adolescence, and later, he wooed her (in a strikingly highfalutin fashion, on the evidence of the letters); she rebuffed him, in terms just about as lofty and obscure as his own; then they settled down to correspond with one another, on and off, for the rest of their lives. Intermittently they made plans to meet, which seldom came to anything; at all times, even when they approached each other for a lack of understanding or (on her side especially) for a lack of helpfulness in dealing with the murderous whims of the authorities, they reaffirmed the intimacy of the relationship between them. During most of the years of the correspondence, appalling things were happening around them: some of these, like the siege of Leningrad, could be cautiously spoken of; others, like the Great Terror, took place in a silence that could be broken by little more than faintly whispered hints and innuendoes. The best way one has of conveying the "quality of life" (and death) which produced the correspondence is to note that Olga Freidenberg and her mother were able to survive the rigours of the siege because of the store of food and warm clothing which she had collected for her brother after his arrest by the secret police, and which she had never been able to deliver to him.

An unexpected consequence of reading the entire compilation is that one ends it with a greater degree of sympathy for Olga Freidenberg than for the poet. Within the bounds of what is presented here, she also emerges, even more surprisingly, as the better writer. This is partly due to the fact that the device of the "diary" enables her to express herself, and to explain herself, with a candour that is denied to her cousin. It is also true that Pasternak could put even less into his letters than she about what he was going through during the Stalin years. He survived those years honourably, without perjuring others or betraying himself; a great moral achievement for a man occupying so prominent a place in Russian letters. Through a combination of good luck and a degree of sensible caution in his handling of the authorities, he was able to continue working (on translations, chiefly; rather than on his own poetry), and to make some courageous intercessions on behalf of writers and intellectuals in a position worse than his own. However, these letters also suggest that in some ways he was supported or sustained by a readiness to fall into the state of withdrawal or self-absorption which was (so to speak) native to him; a readiness to let the political exigencies of the time, but which cannot be thought of simply as a response to them.

It is not a state of mind which makes for lively letters; or even, sometimes, for comprehensible ones. There are passages in this book when one knows that Pasternak is talking eloquently about himself, but does not know what he is saying; one begins to suspect that the function of the eloquence is to achieve that very effect. Conversely, there are a few occasions when the poet's self-absorption leads him to almost Dickensian or Dostoyevskian heights of unwittingly comic self-revelation.

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It is as well that there are other letters which not only speak of the poems and of *Doctor Zhivago*, but remind us of their qualities. Many of these letters have a kind of moody, bustling responsiveness to what is around him, as well as a suddenly becalmed passivity or patience, which is characteristic of Pasternak's poetry; there are also some descriptions of people and places which bring together wonder and matter-of-factness in a manner which is both peculiar to the writer and yet characteristic of the entire tradition to which he belongs. As, for example, in this description of a former nanny to the children, who suddenly reappeared after a long absence:

She came back a sad figure, smiling enigmatically. Strange things were happening to her; one misfortune followed another. On a rainy night two days before the death of her former mistress she knocked at our door - dirty, rain-soaked, with definite signs of fever. We took her in and put her to bed, still smiling enigmatically, and she immediately fell asleep, her temperature 103°. In the morning it turned out that a short while ago, while moving her things to a new place (who knows how many that makes!) she dragged her heavy basket out of the streetcar to the sidewalk, and, leaving it there with the intention of coming back for it, set off, address in hand (she cannot read), to find her new employers. When, having found them, she returned to the tram-stop, of course all trace of the basket had disappeared, and it contained her accounts and money. We gave her sanctuary. She is terribly slovenly, walks around barefoot with unkempt hair, scratches fistfuls from neighbours' window-sills, and then, having borrowed five rubles from someone, orders a pastry with whipped cream and treats everyone in the kitchen of this densely populated apartment.

The Western reader will perhaps be as struck as much by those fistfuls on the neighbours' window-sills (what are they doing there?) as by anything else in the passage. It goes on in the same vein for another half-page, unfussily but watchfully heaping strangeness upon strangeness to the end.

Olga Freidenberg never married. Towards the end of her life the thought of her cousin's fame appears to have grown more and more important to her: it is as if those millions of people all over the world who knew of his work had become something of a substitute for the immediate family she had never had; and also a consolation of sorts for the deaths and dispersals which had inevitably overtaken the larger family of which she had been a member. After her death Pasternak sent money, and a series of rather cold messages to an aged relative who had conscientiously arranged for her burial, and who was trying to make sure that her scholarly writings would be published. Her work, he wrote, would be published, or not, by her university, and there was nothing that anyone else could do about it; people's memories of others survive of themselves, and never as a result of any deliberate attempt to achieve that end; it is not for the living to arrange the affairs of the dead. Such self-confidence (for that is what Pasternak's half-truths, ultimately expressed) had always been beyond the grasp of his cousin. His admonitions provide an ironic conclusion to the book. In preserving her own letters as well as his, Olga Freidenberg had made a great effort for many years to preempt the decision of posterity.

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The Government of Victorian London 1855-1889

The Metropolitan Board of Works, the Vestries, and the City Corporation

DAVID OWEN

'This is a major work of urban history, a superbly wrought piece of historical reconstruction. It adds enormously to our knowledge and fills what may be termed a scandalous gap in the history of London and the bibliography of current urban history. It will enhance the reputations of Owen and those who have done so much to bring his book to its final polished state.'

Anthony S Wohl

Owen tells in absorbing detail the story of the operations of the Metropolitan Board of Works, its political and other problems, and its limited but significant accomplishments - including the laying down of 83 miles of sewers and the building of the Thames Embankments - before it was replaced in 1889 by the London County Council. His account, based on extensive archival research, is balanced, judicious, lucid, often witty and always urbane.

David Owen, late Gurney Professor of History at Harvard, died in 1968 when the book was still in draft form. Five distinguished scholars have given unstintingly of their time and labour to complete the book and prepare it for publication. Professor Roy Macleod, of the University of London, has edited and updated where necessary substantial portions of the text and notes. Dr Francis Sheppard, General Editor of the *Survey of London*, has written three chapters and completed two others. Dr David Reeder, of the University of Leicester, has prepared the conclusion and compiled the bibliography. Professor Donald Olsen, of Vassar College, has written the introduction to the volume, and Professor John Clive, of Harvard, has contributed a foreword.

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Psycholinguistics

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Persuasion at the pictures

Paul Smith

NICHOLAS PRONAY and D. W. SPRING (Editors)

Propaganda, Politics and Film,
1918-45
302pp. Macmillan. £25.
0 333 30939 1

Where Lenin and Ludendorff agreed, it was not for lesser men to doubt. Film was a powerful instrument in the age of mass political mobilization. The thesis of this collection is that the need to manage mass elections, master conscript armies, and orchestrate or contain popular movements forced twentieth-century politicians to come to terms with the revolution in mass communications which offered new means of operating upon popular opinion. Gaining control over the formation of working-class opinion, Nicholas Pronay contends, "came to be seen by the political leaders of postwar Britain as the most essential step upon which everything else depended, including survival for the political system itself".

Ten of these thirteen studies rely on the example of Britain to show how film figured in the domain of political propaganda from the end of the First World War to the close of the Second. The omission of any treatment of the world's greatest democracy, the United States, and of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, two of the most assiduous exploiters of film as part of a coherent state propaganda, means that France has to provide the only "democratic" comparison and the Soviet Union the only "totalitarian". The British model probably exaggerates the degree of negative censorship characteristic of the western democracies. The Weimar, American, and (it appears from Elizabeth Strelitz's chapter) French republics were all a good deal more liberal than the island monarchy when it came to politically charged films. *La Grande Illusion*, the box-office leader of 1937 in France, could hardly have been made or widely distributed in Britain. It gives, too, a somewhat limited and anemic impression of the possibilities of film for positive propaganda, which, even in wartime, could perhaps be fully realized only in states with régimes whose politics were largely conceived in highly theatrical, hence visually striking, terms.

Like other nations, Britain had made considerable propaganda use of film during the First World War, but the scurry back to "normality" after the Armistice included the immediate dismantling of the Ministry of Information and the near-abandonment of a positive propaganda effort which had always considered awkwardly with the quiet confidence that British values would ultimately triumph by virtue of their self-evident superiority. As late as 1938, Horace Wilson, quoted by Philip Taylor in this volume, wrote: "I find myself unable to show enthusiasm for propaganda by this country and I still cannot bring myself to believe that it is a good substitute for calmly getting on with the business of Government, including a rational foreign policy." But Taylor also quotes Curzon's grudging acknowledgment at the beginning of 1919 that gentlemen might have to steel themselves to do distasteful things: "a complete and contemptuous silence, however gratifying to our self-respect, is no longer a profitable policy in times when advertisement—whether of past achievement or future plans—is, perhaps unfortunately, almost a universal practice of nations as of individuals." Taylor (in a chapter overtaken by the recent publication of his *The Projection of Britain*) and David Ellwood show how some attempt continued to be made between the wars by bodies like the British Council to create a favourable image of Britain in foreign countries, even if it was not always very imaginatively pursued, as when Swiss cinemas asking for British films received (but did not show) two "one showing the propaganda at Eastbourne and a new double hall of a rather inferior type, and the other similar cinema at St. Moritz".

governing circles showed limited interest in using film as an instrument of active propaganda but a good deal in preventing the appearance on the screen of images and ideas subversive of constituted authority. A revealing, if grammatically bewildering, piece by Pronay argues that the activity of the British Board of Film Censors was directed essentially to political rather than moral censorship, in the closest co-operation with the world of politics and government, represented on the Board itself by presidents like Shortt and Tyrrell (respectively a former home secretary and a former permanent head of the Foreign Office) and by the secretary, Brooke-Wilkinson—all with substantial experience in propaganda and counter-subversion work. Conflicts of capital and labour, and scenes "tending to



Michael Redgrave in *The Way to the Stars* (1945). Anthony Asquith's moving film, scripted by Terence Rattigan, about a single RAF station between 1940 and 1944. This still accompanies an article by Geoff Brown on "Europe at War" in *Movies of the Forties*, edited by Ann Lloyd (219pp. Orbis. £7.95. 0 85613 454 6).

disparage public characters and institutions" or "holding up the King's uniform to contempt or ridicule" or depicting "White Men in a state of degradation amidst Far Eastern and Native surroundings" could not be shown. Presumably this was all right with the men who controlled the cinema industry because, apart from coinciding well enough with their own political leanings, it kept off their property material which might lead to audience disturbances and legal prosecution.

Yet was it only this that deprived Britain in the 1920s and 1930s of a socially and politically vigorous cinema, and obliged audiences—if we accept Peter Stead's intriguing suggestion—to get their social reality from Hollywood in an idiom which may have been foreign but corresponded better to the life they knew than the stereotypes and conventions of the domestic product? "Non-theatrical" distribution and "non-film" offered ways round the stranglehold of the censorship and the censors and a means of presenting an alternative view of British society; why were they not more successfully exploited? Only part of the answer is offered here. The documentary movement is roughly defined as the activity of a self-indulgent, peripheral, admiring cultural élite. Pronay finds Orson Welles an innocent in the sphere of politics and propaganda, "well and truly seen through and manipulated by the Labour movement's lack of energy in employing film as a political medium". What is not explored, however, is the role of the cinema in the political life of the working class in Britain until war came.

communication, is the question of whether the nature of the medium was recalcitrant to attempts to employ it as a vehicle for overt political propaganda, as such propaganda was then conceived.

Most European politicians were well behind the technological game. This was perhaps especially true of the left, not least the British left. Word-oriented, print-possessed, wedded to the inculcation of ideas and principles through verbal analysis and argument, relying heavily for its organizational growth on the conjunction of a working-class tradition of self-improvement with the earnest didactic impulse of middle-class intellectuals, it could not catch the idiom of the film. The Workers Educational Association and the Roxy did not mix. As Bert Hogenkamp notes, in his chapter on

power. They were less tied to rhetorical forms and more willing to think advertising beneficial to mankind. Baldwin, as John Ramsay shows, having nothing to say about it with reassuring generality, came over well on film, neatly packaged by the newsreel companies whose sympathies inclined to be wrecking job on innocent Major Attlee in the 1935 election, when Baldwin's scriptwriter was able to see Attlee's text before composing the Prime Minister's).

Film suited the politics of unrestrained, the politics of comfortable inertia next, and the politics of earnest progressivism not at all. Or so one might argue; but whether accurately or not is hard to say from this symposium where the nature of the relationship between political persuasion and film expression is scarcely examined. The late Tom Harrison's contribution, based on the experience of *Mass Observation*, does however toss a large hand-grenade into the discussion by raising the question of whether conscious propaganda with film makes much impact anyway. Surveying the home propaganda effort in the Second World War, Pronay makes much of the power of the newsreels, reaching twenty million people a week, against the non-theatrical offerings of the Ministry of Information's films division, reaching perhaps twelve million a year. Yet he acknowledges that the effect of relentless presentation of an initially unsuccessful war was seriously to erode their popularity. Harrison's data prompt a more radical conclusion: that as early as 1940 audiences were fed up with the newsreels, which had aggravated by thumpingly insistent, heavily verbal propaganda what had always been something of an intrusion into a warm, dark world of entertainment and release. They survived all that E. V. H. Emmett and Leslie Mitchell could throw at them through the blessed capacity to take notice which keeps most of us sane. Harrison doubted that wartime films had anything to do with morale, as elusive concept which he, Lord Horder, Julian Huxley, Richard Crossman and others met periodically to try to define. He was probably right. War is up to a point good for morale in itself: it gets people off aspirins and gives them something to think about. The problem is to invent a peaceful substitute.

The book is full of useful material for the study of the interaction of politics and film, derived from much original research, and will give a valuable stimulus to further work and debate. Parts of it, unfortunately, are written in an English that should never have passed the sub-editor's pencil. With the spectre of facing Germany with a nation disunited along class lines, watching anxiously the progress of those who, like Sir Stafford Cripp, harangued workers of munition factories to seize the arms and turn them against the capitalist imperialist Tory Government, realising how intelligence reports the existence of pockets of ideological treason, the identification between politics and propaganda and more broadly between communications and politics was very strong indeed. There is a good deal of carelessness: Sir George becomes Sir "Edward" Cave and Rachael becomes "Rachel" Low, while the author of the major work on film censorship appears consistently as "Hunning" and is as consistently misquoted. *An Appreciation of the Cinema* is not the title of Thorold Dickinson's book, nor is the alternative bid in the reference as the French Telegraph Act of 1900 had changed its date and its wording by Chapter Eight. The British Council's 1938-39 grant goes up from £160,000 on page 44 to £200,000 on page 37, we hear of "Lord William Tyrrell" and the "13th Select Committee on National Expenditure". The French prove as scrutable as ever: we have "Doument" (with its mysterious "light-house"), "La Jeunesse Patriote", "grandes boulevards". On page 21 three lines are printed twice, which makes no sense anyway.

In the aquarium

Roger Scruton

ALAN WATKINS

Brief Lives
With illustrations by Marc
222pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
0 241 10690 X

Alan Watkins claims to have been more influenced by Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* than by Aubrey, from whom he borrows his title. In truth, the book is as remote from Johnson as Fleet Street journalism is from literature, a fact which is strikingly confirmed in Watkins's inability to perceive that, with some exceptions, his subjects are — if he is any guide to them — of no lasting interest. I add the proviso, since it is clear that Watkins is an unsteady observer of people. Anthony Powell, for example, is certainly an important writer. You would never have guessed the fact, however, from Watkins's portrait. In describing Powell's marriage to Violet Pakenham, sister of the present Earl of Longford, he writes: "Marriage into this large and talkative family, according to Powell, introduced him to numerous relations". Talkativeness is clearly not contagious, at least when Mr Watkins is around. Nevertheless, the sentence is rather typical of the observations contained in this book: banal, lifeless, a trifle absurd in its inappropriateness, and depending for its interest upon the highly accidental connection with a character who, for better or for worse, has got himself a "name" in Fleet Street. We are informed that Lord Bradwell was "basically a tall, thin, dark man", that Michael Foot "was attractive to both men and women" — a phrase which momentarily awakens some interest in this most overrated of Fleet Street's creations, until Watkins adds "in the sense that, having met him, most people liked him and wanted to be in his company".

The rambling collection of oddments concerning Sir Ian Gilmore concludes "On the whole, Gilmore was a force for the good", a sentence which might have excused itself had Watkins anywhere told us what he means by "good". As a political journalist, however, he eschews ideas, an ordinance which greatly hampers him when he comes to describe Anthony Crosland, William Robson and G. E. Moore, since to leave out their ideas is to leave out all that is interesting. This unconcern for ideas is not, in my view, balanced by any lively concern for detail, or by any psychological penetration. The figures have a cardboard quality, and the anecdotes that are pinned to them are often extremely inconsequential. Worst of all are the jokes and bon mots, which are chronically anti-climactic. The following are not untypical: "One of the worst things you can say about someone is that he is a good broadcaster" — this from Philip Hope-Wallace, who generously attributed it, we are told, to Harold Nicolson; "only poets drink rosé" (Sir John Junor); "I was never an alcoholic, only a bit of a botzer" (Malcolm Muggeridge); "I like good food and wine as much as Roy Jenkins does, but I keep quiet about it" (David Steel).

When Watkins is moved by personal feeling, as in his portraits of his father and of Iain Macleod, he writes well and with a certain pathos. But the relief is rare, and for anyone who does not know the characters, and who is not persuaded that people important in Fleet Street are for that reason important in the world, the mass of the book makes tedious reading. (One is reminded of the time when Paul Johnson changed his mind about socialism, and the media were

swimming from the effects of it; it was as though Marx had become a Christian, or Bach had joined the atonal school. All at once the whole world was supposed to examine its conscience, and answer "right" or "wrong".) The judgments, when they are offered, are astonishingly naïve. We are told that *Lucky Jim* "struck a mighty blow for democracy in the English novel", an observation based on the claim that to treat a lower-class hero without patronage came as a radical departure. It is clearly time for Fleet Street to renew its acquaintance with English literature — starting, perhaps, with *Piers Plowman*. Again, we are told that David Steel "was [the past tense is a persistent affectation] one of the most skilful, determined and creative politicians of the post-war period" — although nothing is said about what Steel stands for, why. The judgment illustrates Watkins's parochialism. No foreign politician could be considered in what is essentially a gallery of drinking companions, so that those who might really deserve such praise — de Gaulle, Sadat, Tito, and a few other not necessarily amiable men — are ruled out from the start, while those English politicians who do not regard Fleet Street as the true forum of political transformation, such as Mrs Thatcher, or Mr Benn, are perceived only as figures on a distant horizon, not to be compared with the chaps in the bar. Watkins praises, as models of political journalism (and they may well be that), some of the archest of Hugh Massingham's trivia, and singles out A. J. P. Taylor as "one of the best writers of English prose of this century" — a judgment which is truly amazing, unless you think that only journalists and popular historians write English prose.

Brief Lives is undeniably an interesting document. We are familiar with the Marxist accusation, that the so-called "free press" of the Western world is no more than a carefully conducted system of privilege, designed to raise into eminence those opinions and personalities which are fit for establishment consumption. This book illustrates the falsehood of the charge. The modern political journalist is not interested in any establishment that he does not himself create. He inhabits a kind of aquarium, from which the distorted features of nearby political fauna can be observed, but which maintains life and feeling at a level of tepid banality. Occasionally one or other passer-by enters the swim, and becomes hilariously intimate. For the most part, however, the world of living people remains inaccessible and uninviting. The centre of the aquarium is at El Vino's (frequently mentioned by Watkins); its periphery embraces Sir Bridge's and the Temple Bar. Escorted there, the journalist can be bounded in a wineglass, and yet count himself king of infinite space. Because he monopolizes the political education of millions, he imagines that he has privileged access to the events which govern them. Every fact or personality that captures his attention is regarded as intrinsically interesting; the proof being that it can be converted into short, clear sentences and handed to the printer. Critical judgment and felt observation are not advised — first impressions are enough to disclose the real importance of events; since their importance lies in first impressions.

Journalism consists in retailing first impressions second hand. One should not regret this fact. Journalism is not literature; on the contrary, it depends precisely on suspending the faculties of judgment and observation which literature inculcates. And for this reason, *Brief Lives*, unlike its namesake, will exemplify its name.

On Depositing the Check for a Legacy

Dinner is over and not much is left.
Bones that might contribute to a soup.
Some sticks of celery, and two burnt tarts.
Into the icebox with it all. Sweep off
The crumbs and leave the dishes in the sink.
Let's open the brandy and play hearts.

Tom Disch

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CAROLINE SEEBOHM

The Man Who Was Vogue: The Life and Times of Condé Nast
390pp. with 47 illustrations.
Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £12.50.
0 297 78148 4

WILFRED SHEED

Clare Boothe Luce
183pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£12.95.
0 297 78146 4

"A modest Medici, directing a modest art to its finest achievement", is how Caroline Seebom describes Condé Nast in this conscientious and affectionately written biography. The modest art alluded to is photography, particularly the work of a succession of outstanding men and one woman (Toni Frissell), which was introduced to an upper-class public through the pages of Condé Nast's flagship publication, *Vogue*. The man who owned and published the British, French and American editions of *Vogue*, as well as *House & Garden*, *Glamour* and *Vanity Fair*, summed up by saying, "Here I was, just a boy from St. Louis and Edna Chase (*Vogue's* editor for half a century) a Quaker from New Jersey. Between us we set the standards of the time. We showed America the meaning of style."

Condé Nast dealt in that elusive merchandise called fashion. We know it is important, we know it shapes and gives tone to the lives of even the most dedicated anti-materialists. The minicomics that divide our life-spans into recognizable periods are defined by fashions in clothes, furniture, colour, automobile design, music and courtship, yet fashion is a subject that dissolves under the touch. Deep thinking applied to it nearly always seems silly. Why do hemlines go up? Some say it's because a war is coming, so cloth has had to be husbanded; others say it is a manufacturer's conspiracy to make sure that whatever hangs in one's closet will soon be embarrassingly out of style. In the late 1960s the fashion was no fashion - blue jeans, boots and second-hand army jackets - but in due course no fashion becomes as unfashionable as fashion.

Somewhere in the United States there is an organization called The Color Institute which is reputed to be perfecting that part of the spectrum which will be fashionable in the mid to late 1980s, so that the drapers, the weavers, the paint manufacturers, the plastics people can get together on rudimentary colour coordination. That seems to be the extent of conscious control of the flow of fashion, by any centralized institution, so the riddle is unsolved. In the America of the 1930s it is impossible to tell if sack dresses, pillbox hats, tail fins and Danish modern furniture made Dwight Eisenhower, the Cold War and the Baby Boom or if they merely reflected them.

Caroline Seebom has no better luck at answering these questions than others who have tried before her. We are left with the life story of a businessman who probably was more important than Arthur Smith of Smith Nut, Screw and Bolt, Inc. but we are not really told why. Seebom credits Nast with having invented café society. "Around 1922," she quotes him, "I got a little money and decided to give a party. I thought, 'My God! I can't give a party; my friends are too mixed up; I can't leave out George Gershwin and I can't leave out Mrs Vanderbilt and I can't have them together. I did, and to my surprise, everyone liked it.'"

We can suppose this was quite a coup at the time, but it seems to have had no effect on either Gershwin's art or on the flow of Mrs Vanderbilt's blue blood. Mr. Nast had famously expensive parties at which businessmen, society and the more commercially successful people from the world of art and entertainment drank and danced. He did not conduct a salon; his social life was not the centre of any school of painting or design. No thinker met in his immensely expensive drawing-rooms for the first time to great subsequent effect; Condé

Nast was the Hugh Hefner of his day - or perhaps one should say that Hugh Hefner is the Condé Nast of ours.

This house became the venue for parties and a haven for house guests, particularly visitors from Europe. Harry Yoxall, who used to stay there on visits from London, remembered there was always something faintly amateurish about the running of the household. "None of the luggage turned up in our rooms, I recall. And when we played bridge after dinner, the butler was so eager to clean up ashtrays that you couldn't concentrate on the game. It was as though they had all been hired for the night." Shades of Gatsby, Yoxall felt, Nast's perfectionism competed with his inexperience in such large-scale hospitality. But Sandy Key, as Nast's daughter Natica named the place, was never less than glamorous and in those days when swimming pools were still a rarity, his was one of the biggest and grandest anyone had ever seen.

Anyone who has been to Hefner's establishment in either Chicago or Los Angeles would recognize the description.

Like Hefner, Nast's admiration for rather young ladies never waned, never weakened, even in old age. But, unlike most of those who have written about Hefner, Seebom is fond of her subject. Her affection for him enables her to show an interesting and not unwelcome personality, one that might do well in fiction. But the constraints of non-fiction, plus a talent not given to embroidering human possibilities, keep us from getting close to Nast. When, in his late fifties, he sends away a young, lovely and devoted wife because the stock-market crash has ruined him, we would like to know more about it. He obviously needs her love; she wants to give it. But in order to explain what happened, the author might have had to invent.

Though this is a book about Condé Nast's life and "his times", Mr Seebom's strength is not in the latter. Many famous names are mentioned but the reader is not transported back to the New York of the Twenties and the Twenties where Nast flourished. Her style, always clear and always chatty, isn't up to it. To compensate there are amusing anecdotes. One of the best being about the lady whose cremated ashes were mistaken by her degenerate friends for cocaine. Her last resting-place was up their noses.

Wilfred Sheed is the better writer, and his style is capable of transporting one anywhere, but his book is less readable than Caroline Seebom's. His subject, Clare Boothe Luce, worked for Condé Nast as editor of his now successful magazine, *Vanity Fair*, and, incidentally, about to be revived by the corporation which has fallen heir to all the old Nast properties.

In the summer of 1949, Sheed was invited to spend the holidays with Mrs Luce on her Connecticut estate. He passed a pleasant time, met famous people at Henry Luce's dining-table and was sweetly treated by his hostess, so that this volume might be regarded as a very long overdue bread-and-butter letter - a thank-you note lost for thirty years in the mail. Although some passages seem to be stylized conversations with his subject, you can't call it an "on-the-job" book. Even Mrs Luce, who has seldom been taxed with having too low an opinion of herself, would not suggest she is the prototype of modern American woman as Sheed does. "Clare's career is a guidebook to what a woman without inherited means thought she had to do to get ahead in this American century," he tells us. Which is true, though if getting ahead means getting rich, mostly by marrying millionaires.

Lacking footnotes, research or any of the impedimenta signalling serious intent, this book cannot be thought of as a biography; rather, it is an affectionate defence of a wasted talent. At one time Clare Boothe was a promising playwright and journalist. However, her last work of note or merit (by her knight-defender's own estimation) was published: over forty years ago. Good as she was, her big hit, *The Woman*, didn't make a permanent reputation for her. From 1940 on, she is of interest only as a politician, but

her political career was short and marginal. She served two terms as a Congresswoman in the early 1940s, establishing a reputation for herself as a harsh, Roosevelt-hating reactionary. In the 1950s she was the American ambassador to Italy, but this appointment was Eisenhower's pay-off to her husband, Henry Luce, for using the power of Time-Life, Inc to put Ike in the White House. As a diplomat she did no better and no worse than many other campaign contributors who have been rewarded with a free tenancy in an ambassadorial mansion. On the whole, though, Mrs Luce has done little during the past forty years but be rich, so that writing nearly 200 pages of encomiastic prose about a beautiful and gifted might-have-been tests Sheed's not inconsiderable abilities.

He succeeds in rescuing her from the suspicion that she is who she is only because of her two rich husbands, and the section of *Clare Boothe Luce* devoted to arguing that Mrs Luce is rich, but not that rich, is persuasive, though not very important. That is little enough to say on behalf of a woman who did one a kindness, but Sheed has too much to say which is inaccurate or misleading. Thank-you notes are one thing, but accepting Clare Boothe Luce's unsupported words about her and Franklin Roosevelt and politics cannot be excused by being the obligations of a house guest. Sheed apparently believes her assertion that it was one of her "gang, she forgets which, [that] did indeed coin the phrase 'New Deal', thinking little of it". The authors of the New Deal speech have been traced by a number of historians and they do not include her "gang", which was composed of men like the stockjobber Bernard Baruch, her boy friend at the time, and Walter Lippmann; people who were politically opposed to and contemptuous of FDR.

"Make no mistake, it was fascism," she says of the first one hundred days of the New Deal. Yes, yes, but in June of 1932, just after FDR's nomination, *Vanity Fair*, where she was managing editor, printed an article by Jay Franklin, a friend. Sheed writes, who "influenced" her. The article was called, "Wanted: a Dictator!" It read, "Representative government has collapsed before the clamor of special interests. The American people can give no mandate before November, and the situation is critical. We must declare an immediate truce on party politics and create, legally or illegally, an emergency organization for the executive power to rescue the national finances and the national credit from the nerveless hands of a lobby-ridden Congress. The alternative is chaos." This piece was signed "The Editors". In preparing her book on Nast, Caroline Seebom asked Mrs Luce about this editorial and was told that she had refused to sign it, that she had even threatened to resign over it. No third party evidence supporting this version of events exists, but we do know that this was precisely the period when men like Baruch were attracted to Mussolini and after Roosevelt's election, were to urge fascism on him as a model.

By the end of the 1930s, Mrs Luce had won herself a reputation as a pathological Roosevelt hater. While FDR was alive it was not he but rather Clare Boothe Luce who was thought of as having the fascist inclinations, a person close to the people who accused Roosevelt of having set up Pearl Harbor in order to involve America in the Second World War. As Sheed writes,

Clare also maintained that FDR had "led us into war," making him the sole culprit. She now says she would like to apologize to Roosevelt, because lying was clearly the only way to get us there. . . . But for all her complaints about being misunderstood, she must have known which part of the sentence

contained the dynamite. She was calling Roosevelt a warmonger at a time when people were delirious about his war.

It was not "his war," as Sheed calls it, and his use of this phrase illustrates one of the problems with his book. He has not provided adequate background to the history of the period in which Mrs Luce was most active. Nevertheless, he has some sense of how his contemporaries judged her, for he writes that, "glibing at Roosevelt brought her not only enemies but friends; in this case, a jeering, rancorous gallery, along with a few sensible, which attached itself to Clare in the forties and has never really let go. They are a dismally easy crowd to play to, roaring at everything halfway nasty, whatever its quality. But an audience is an audience and a trouper must work."

Trouper Clare was looking a little like Storm Trooper Clare by the end of her political career. To show that she really is a more balanced person, Sheed discusses her connection with William Buckley and his *National Review*, a publication with approximately the same political perspectives as the Argentine Junta. It is at Buckley's place that Mrs Luce fits in.

There is a J. K. Galbraith and a Milton Friedman may be heard discussing ski slopes or whatever, while outside the Archie Bunkers or foot soldier of bigotry slug it out over doctrine. The top people have no need to shout; they leave that to the servant.

It is amazing how many public matters from debate to bus stop can be nonideologically discussed if they have to be, ie by people who have to do something about them.

But even this depoliticized snobbery cannot give Sheed's heroine the look of someone other than a rich old woman grumbling about the payment of taxes.

David Pryce-Jones

RAYMOND TOURNOURX
Le Royaume d'Oïto
405pp. Paris: Flammarion.
2 08 06445 8

In the manner more of a novelist than a historian, Raymond Tournoux picks to pieces in his latest book the decision-making processes of some of the making of the French Republic. Frenchmen who accommodated to the Germans in the collapse of 1940 and its aftermath. Public personalities who ought to have known better nevertheless headed for disaster. To what extent did Pétain and Laval and other more ideologically-minded collaborators realize what they were doing? Such new evidence as M Tournoux has found dominates the shape of the work, which is unbalanced, indeed an absolute ragbag, but highly absorbing.

Political arguments could be put forward that French national interests ought to have been represented as defensively as possible to the suddenly victorious Germans, just as on the other side de Gaulle was keeping alive the alternative of the English alliance. The Vichy régime was formed when the outcome of the war looked uncertain, to say the least, and it was as well to hedge all bets. In this framework Pétain made to the nation what he called the gift of his person. There was not much political experience behind this, and even less vision, but there was no mystery either. Patriotic, upright and well-meaning, he believed that he was protecting France from something worse at Hitler's hands. For M Tournoux, so far so good.

In November 1942, when the Allies landed in North Africa and the Germans occupied the whole of France in those, the logic of the Pétain régime abruptly ceased to apply. As in 1940, a choice had to be taken whose consequences were bound to be dramatic and far-reaching. Vichy and the Free French could have been united, if Pétain had ordered Vichy forces in North Africa not to resist the Allies, and gone with his government to join them, at the same time perhaps saving the Toulon fleet from its scuttling. To continue in office as before was in effect to surrender unconditionally, as was argued by General Weygand, for instance, or Admiral Auphan. Henceforward the French were compelled by the Germans to co-ordinate themselves through the instruments of Vichy. To Advocate staying put, as the likes of General Bridoux and Admiral Platon did, led irrevocably to French soldiers appearing in German uniforms, to the *milice*, to the despatch of the Vichy government to the dying Third Reich, and so to the firing-squads conducting treason and civil war.

One of Tournoux's showpieces is the reconstruction of the debate in Vichy French literature between the 1930s and 1950s with a very different quotation from a very different author: "Mean something! You and I, mean something!" exclaims a character in Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, to the accompaniment of an abrupt laugh. "Ah, that's a good one!"

Nor is this the only reason for feeling a renewed sympathy for the critics who, in 1947, based their objections to Sartre's *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* on the grounds that it was the cobblers who stuck to their last who made the best shoes. As Lotman very sensibly observes in his Introduction, you need to be something of a loner to produce good literature. This was certainly true of the Céline who wrote *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, the Sartre who produced *La Nausée* and the Camus of *L'Étranger*, and there is a sense in which it applies to *La Condition humaine*, and *Les Malins* as well. Both are problematic works which are ultimately critical of political commitment, at least in the simplified sense implied by the various conferences and congresses described in this book. For not the least of Lotman's achievements is to have distilled what must have been the unutterable tedium of listening to all the German, in the end, he also believed that he was the man to build a bridge back to de Gaulle, neither of which illusions says much for his

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The will to collaboration

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vaunted cleverness. His policy of collaboration relieved the Germans from administration and police work which was not only unpopular but also could not have been performed by such manpower as they had. As for German long-term intentions, upon which Laval relied, Goebbels noted in his diary after a conversation with Hitler, that if the French really knew what the Führer had in store for them their eyes would pop out of their heads.

Tournoux has also had access to the diary of Marcel Déat, and is the first to quote largely from it, by this means bringing into relief that strange, glib fanatic with a genius for self-deception. The son of a railwayman, Déat had become a *normalien* and an academic. Entering politics as a socialist, he had been briefly the trusted friend of Léon Blum, and a junior minister. What seems originally to have driven him into appeasement was dread of a French defeat. After 1940, this developed into the certainty that Germany was invincible for ever more. Socialism and pacifism were transformed into an eagerness to be a conqueror too, a leader in Hitler's New Europe.

Rationalizing fascism to suit himself, Déat founded his Rassemblement National Populaire, which he hoped would provide the basis of a new one-party state. Arch-professor that he was, and quite useless as a demagogue, his diary none the less reveals how uncritically he accepted every tenet of Hitlerism, down to the crudest anti-semitism. With the complete absence of self-consciousness which stamps the monomaniac, he recorded how well he was getting on, including such details as the good food he was eating.

For help and subsidies, Déat turned to the Germans, notably Otto Abetz, Ribbentrop's representative, and ambassador in Paris. The maintenance in office of Déat was central to Abetz's policy, and to that end it suited him to hold Déat in reserve, playing off the so-called *ultra* against the supposed moderate. This proved a continuous feature of "Le Royaume d'Oïto", a phrase of Céline's covering embassy activities of the kind. In his exploration of this kingdom, Tournoux gives brief descriptions of lesser courtiers, like the German writer Friedrich Sieburg, the diplomat Ernst Achenbach, and Céline himself.

Abetz's influence and power, however, did not match those of the two other German kingdoms in Paris, one run by the Military Governor for the Wehrmacht, the second by the SS and SD on behalf of the Nazi Party. They too had their chosen favourites, such as Fernand de Brinon, Joseph Darnand, and especially Jacques Doriot, whose claims to be a leader of the masses were more realistic than Déat's. Thus various German agencies sponsored and institutionalized among French collaborators a brute power-struggle, but this larger aspect of things Tournoux has not investigated.

The search for motives leads Tournoux to confront the fact that the various collaborators conceived themselves to be indispensable. This was wish-fulfilment. Claiming to represent military or political realities at a historic moment, they were projecting personal ambitions, usually to the point of fantasy. At the core of this study is a clear-sighted view of the vanity which can impel otherwise intelligent men to suspend reason, with catastrophic results.

Phillip Thody

HERBERT R. LOTTMAN
The Left Bank: Writers, Artists, and Politics from the Popular Front to the Cold War
319pp. Heinemann. £12.50.
034 42943 0

In 1936, in a phrase quoted by Herbert R. Lotman at the beginning of *The Left Bank*, Jean Guéhenno proudly declared:

Writers - our comrades - who have travelled to the United States, or across Latin America, have been telling us how closely those peoples are following current events in France. On the success or failure of the French Popular Front may depend, they assure us, the political orientation of the world for the next fifty years.

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Crypto-Christian with a pipe

Douglas Johnson

JEAN FABRE

Maigret: Enquête sur un enquêteur
307pp. Montipier: Université Paul
Valéry, 58Fr.

When the late Rupert Davies was being considered for the role of Inspector Maigret in the BBC television series, part of the auditioning process was a series of interviews with Maigret's creator, Georges Simenon. As the story was told by Davies, at a certain moment, without thinking, he rose from his chair, went over to the window and looked down at the street below. This gesture convinced Simenon: it was Maigret. Whether in his office, Quai des Orfèvres, or at home, Boulevard Richard-Lenoir, the window was important for him. "Maigret était debout devant la fenêtre ouverte, pipe à la bouche, mains dans les poches, dans une pose qui lui était familière".

The story confirms what many people have always believed, that Maigret is a very real and special character for Simenon. Although Simenon has, from time to time, expressed boredom and impatience with him, as he has with the whole process of novel writing, he has returned more than once to "mon ami Maigret". In three cycles, from 1929 to 1933, from 1938 to 1941, and then from 1945 to 1973, he published more than a hundred novels and short stories revolving around the famous commissaire, which suggests a deep affinity between author and hero. This has to be considered along with Simenon's constant penchant for autobiographical writings in a variety of forms, and there is no reason to think that this element is absent from the "romans-Maigret" when it is notably present in the other "romans-romans" (what Simenon calls the "romans-durs"). Simenon claims, in his *livre-somme*, the *Mémoires intimes* (published in 1981), that his life is significant but that his fiction is not ("J'oublie mes romans sticht écrits"), but one might be well advised not to take this comment too seriously; we are undoubtedly dealing with someone whose creative talents are linked to his personal experiences and preoccupations.

Simenon himself has hardly shrunk from the assimilation of himself to his character, since he has allowed a successful paperback edition of the Maigret novels to carry the mark of Maigret, in the form of a pipe, along with a photograph of the author smoking a large pipe. Simenon's father died at the age of forty-four, as did Maigret's, and both fathers were twenty-four when their sons were born. Maigret's father (who had the unusual name of Eyniste, a name which also exists in Simenon's Belgian family) was the *régisseur* at a château near Moulins, while Simenon himself worked for the *régisseur* of a château in the same part of France. Maigret was a medical student until obliged to abandon his studies when his uncle died. While Simenon, who knew medical students when they lodged in the parental home, has always had an interest in and a nostalgia for the doctor's profession. As every reader of the Maigret novels knows, the commissaire is haunted by memories of the smells and images of his childhood, and exactly the same preoccupation is shown by Simenon in his many autobiographical writings, interviews and *diaries*. It probably takes a devotee to point to other similarities. Maigret, feeling a certain satisfaction when he stands on the *servant's* side of the bar (in *Maigret et le corps sans tête*), or in particular excellent when he finds himself virtually running a restaurant (in *Maigret et son mort*) recalls Simenon's mother, who always wanted him to become a shopkeeper. We know that Simenon's own tastes in food, "les plats populaires" were "imposés à mon bon Maigret"; and Maigret's childhood fear of eating a four-pound loaf before dinner (*Les Maigrets*) recalls Simenon's own story of how he ate twelve croissants with his morning coffee, to the disapproval of the *blanchisseuse*.

Yet Simenon has stated categorically that he does not identify himself with

Maigret: "Je n'ai jamais imaginé que je ressemblais à Maigret". And Jean Fabre, in his careful study, has now introduced a different way in which to look at the relationship between the two. The "romans-Maigret" are, it seems, about the process of novel writing. Certain of them begin with a description of white light. This, according to Fabre, represents the white paper which faces the writer as he begins work (in *Quand j'étais vieux*, Simenon comments on his early fascination with white paper). Sometimes the novel begins with Maigret writing a report, or rounding off the details of a case which has been concluded: thus one affair, like the previous novel, has ended, a new affair, like the new novel, is about to begin. At a certain point in the novel Maigret is uneasy, nervous, bad-tempered, he cannot see how he will find a solution to his problems; the author of the novel has the same experience as he wonders how his book will develop and hesitates over the different possibilities with which he is confronted. Maigret, like the novelist, tries intuitively to enter into the personalities of the characters with whom he has to deal; he seeks to assemble and to co-ordinate the images he is presented with. Like the narrator of a novel, he is the originator of action, the source of knowledge and understanding. Madame Maigret, like the wife of the novelist, is obliged to share these moments of doubt and anguish, just as she can also participate in the relief which accompanies the successful ending of an *enquête*, or the conclusion of a novel. As Simenon once explained to Roger Stéphane, "il n'y a rien qui ressemble à un roman comme une enquête policière".

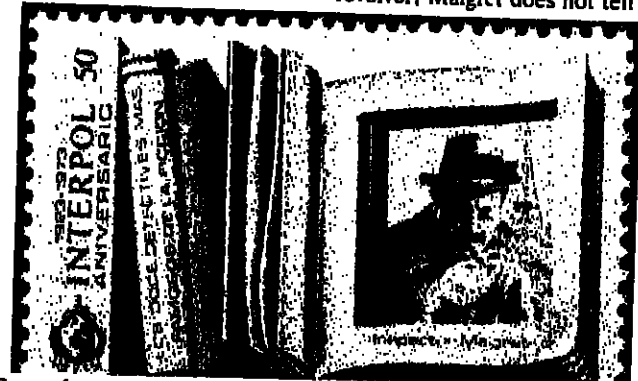
This complex game with mirrors became more acute in 1951, with the publication of *Les Mémoires de Maigret*, when we are presented with the Maigret novels and completing the texts with additional information about his life and activities. The earnestness of Simenon's procedure is only equalled by Gide, who in *Les Faux Monnayeurs* wrote a novel about a man who kept a journal while endeavouring to write a novel, while Gide himself kept *Le Journal des Faux Monnayeurs* about the writing of his novel. According to Simenon, Gide was the one man with whom he has ever kept up a long correspondence.

It was necessary for this dimension to be added to the "romans-Maigret" because simply as detective novels they leave a lot to be desired. It is usually accepted that a detective novel should be an exercise in rationalism, and the task of the detective to unravel a mystery by reasoning and identify the criminal. This process is not at all prominent in the Maigret novels. The game whereby suspicion is deliberately thrown upon one character after another, so that the reader is bemused until he is confronted with a final revelation is largely absent. Maigret makes no claim to be a rationalist. "Je ne pense jamais" and "je ne crois rien" are customary responses to his enquiries about what he thinks. He expresses his contempt for the intellectual crime and he is always presented as the reflective but passive observer, turning things over and over "dans sa lourde tête" (*Le Châtelier de la Providence*), and "waiting expectantly for things to sort themselves out. So much so that Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie has suggested that the historian could take Maigret as a model, and confine his role to that of an observer and a listener. It is true that on occasions Maigret takes notes and the reader joins him in consulting them (as in *Le Chien Jaune*). Once when on leave from the Quai des Orfèvres, and when the enquiry is being conducted by Inspector Janvier, his subordinate, Maigret follows the unravelling of the crime as a member of the public and the reader shares his self-questioning and his puzzlement (*Maigret s'amuse*).

But the normal reader of the detective novel must be disappointed. The unmasking of the criminal is sometimes so simple as to be anti-climatic, as when a parasite is applied to an old servant and it is clear

that she has shot her employer (*Maigret et les Vieillards*, a novel which Simenon thought one of his finest), or when a witness emerges from nowhere in order freely to provide the vital evidence (*Monsieur Gallet décédé*). Sometimes the murderer is a shadowy, unknown figure who is introduced just in time to be identified (*Maigret aux Assises*) or the long arm of coincidence is yanked right out of its socket, as when, at the very beginning of a case, Maigret decides to go into a particular café which turns out to be the hub of the whole affair (*Maigret et le corps sans tête*).

One therefore has to explain why the Maigret stories have been so successful, given that they do not follow the normal rules of the detective novel. Fabre has analysed the phenomenon and he considers the



Part of a stamp which the Republic of Nicaragua issued to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Interpol in 1972.

commisaire as hero in the light of sociological and economic considerations. As a character Maigret is surrounded by a solid reality, one to which repeated reference is made: his childhood, his early days with the police, his life with Madame Maigret, the ritual of his professional existence. But Maigret is also, as Fabre points out, both timeless and isolated. We know that he started his life as a policeman before the First World War, but that he is still active well after the Second. He has no children (a certain pathos is thereby given to the Maigret *ménage*, since we know that they would have liked to have children), he works with a team of detectives but he has no relations with them outside the service; the Maigrets have, as their only friends, the *Paroisses* (he is the *médiclin légiste* for the Police judiciaire and his name may well be significant), with whom they have dinner once a month; Madame Maigret is part of the background rather than an instigator of action (even when she provides the origins of the story, as in *L'Anle de Madame Maigret*), and it is appropriate that we often know what she is wearing, as we always know what she has been cooking, but that we never learn what she looks like.

Maigret then is particularly fitted to play the rôle of God, and this is emphasized by the frequent use of imagery associated with the Church (all the more noticeable because it is austere). Many of the novels begin with Maigret being woken in the middle of the night by the telephone; he sometimes imagines that he is once again a child, aroused by the alarm-clock so that he can be served at mass. When he testifies before the judge, he sees himself once again behind the *sacristain*, approaching the altar. Law courts, whether in France or elsewhere, are compared to churches, and ecclesiastical ritual has its similarity to the rituals of the police. Within this framework, Maigret sometimes appears as confessor, teacher or father-figure ("mes enfants", he says to his colleagues, "mon petit" to a variety of witnesses, "imbécile" to various unfortunate).

But Fabre points out that Maigret's function is two-fold. He has to apply the law and see to it that the criminal is punished. He also wants to apply other principles, described here as "cryptosocial", Maigret sees himself as a "récormodeur d'âmes", perhaps as a "récormodeur de société". In *Le Chien Jaune* he states, quite falsely, that it was he who put strychnine in the *apart*, and thereby allows a young couple to go free (he also gives them money and says that he will respect it on his expense account). He is always

sympathetic towards "les petites gens" (in Simenon's own words, "ce que je ne peux pas appeler autrement que des petites gens").

But it is not always so simple. *La Première Enquête de Maigret* shows him abandoning the cause of justice and allowing a rich family to go unpunished, accepting in return the successful furtherance of his own career. *Maigret aux Assises* shows him allowing the man who has just been acquitted of murder to find and kill the real murderer. In this case Maigret is installed in his office in the Quai des Orfèvres, controlling the movements of several characters by telephone, and it is remarkable that although one of his more obscure detectives, Neveu, has established that the central figure has acquired a revolver, Maigret does not tell this to

himself is covered in snow and that any form of walking is almost impossible, the final touch in a novel in which Maigret is totally unable to understand what is going on.

As Maigret struggles with that which he is not familiar - aristocrats, doctors, wealthy families, barmen, diplomats, unknown countries or unknown areas of Paris - he is not seeking to know or to discover so much as to understand. He is not so much an instrument of the law, investigating crimes which terrify or horrify (Jean Paulhan pointed out that there is no sense of tragedy in these novels), as a man able to indulge his curiosity. He compares his rôle to that of the psychologist, or doctor, or biographer, complaining only that the detective is expected to do things more quickly. One of his favourite games is to sit in a café and watch his neighbour, to guess what his next gesture will be. When faced by a suspect, his first thought is to reflect, for example, that there is a man who can't often laugh out loud. Observing another character, he wonders why she continues to hide the fact that she drinks when she has otherwise given up all pretence. He sees two men playing dominoes. Do they play at the same time every day? When did they start the habit? He watches a cat approach a stove and start away in surprise when it discovers that the stove is cold. Maigret absorbs experience, he does not simply search for clues.

For many readers, the Maigret novels have the great merit of displaying France and the French. With the *commissaire* we discover not only the geography of Paris, small provincial towns in all their melancholy and the isolated communities that live around harbours, canals and châteaux, but also what exists behind "le visage banal" normally presented to outsiders. The *valets de chambre* who marry cooks and who come to Paris and take over cafés, the man whose Protestant upbringing in Nîmes prevents him from saying *tu* to people, the inspectorate which seems to be made up of men from the Massif Central, the youth who has "une bonne chaire drue de jeune paysan à qui Paris n'avait pas encore pris sa santé", all these are part of the display of France. It is not surprising that Maigret should come from a village near Moulins, the centre of the hexagon, or that he should have an endless interest in the variety of his country. As he tastes a wine he tries to place it, it has "un parfum de terroir", and since it comes from the region of Poitiers he is soon bound to recognize its "arrière-goût de pierre à fusil".

The fact that this is a stereotyped vision of France makes it all the more real, and probably explains why it is that Maigret has not become the plaything of his fans. The devotees of Sherlock Holmes may discuss the colour of his dressing-gown, whether he was educated at Oxford or Cambridge, or the whereabouts of his bee-keeping retreat in Sussex. No one (least of all the Magduonais) discusses Maigret's retirement to Meung-sur-Loire, or whether he chose that town because it had a connection with Janvier (there are four Janvier listed on the 1914-1918 war memorial there). The reality of Maigret is a French reality rather than an individual one. Viewers of the BBC series did not discuss whether Madame Maigret was portrayed as being too slim or Inspector Lucas as too tall, they wondered whether Maigret, as a Frenchman, would kiss his wife on the mouth when he returned home from work, or whether French matches would in fact light when struck against a wall, as Rupert Davies (possibly using English matches?) demonstrated at the beginning of each programme.

The France of Jules Maigret is attractive also because it is the past. Maigret would have disliked railway stations which are dependent upon computers, he would have been at a loss when confronted by blocks of flat without *concierges*, he would have been ill at ease in cafés dominated by cassette music and electronic games. He would have despised *la nouvelle cuisine*. It is understandable that it is nearly ten years since he appeared in a new story.

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Christopher Lawrence

LESTER S. KING

Medical Thinking: A Historical Preface
336pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £13.80. 0 691 08397 9

In 1979, in a book called *The Medusa and the Snail*, Lewis Thomas, a physician, examined "Medical lessons from history". Thomas's conclusions were routinely Whiggish. The medical past was a farrago of guesswork, empiricism, weird imaginings and even weirder happenings. Doctors for the most part did little more than inflict frivolous and irresponsible treatment on the innocent sick. The only surprising thing about all this was that the profession was able to get away with it for so long. Sometime in the 1830s, Thomas concluded, it was discovered that the greater part of medicine was nonsense. "This in my view," says Lester King in *Medical Thinking* "is an absolute misreading of history". Now, were it the case that King's objection was only to the supercilious and unsympathetic tone of Thomas's account he might find few to disagree, at least outside medicine. King however recoils at something more than Thomas's dismissive posture. Such a vision, he complains, distorts the equitable flow of things medical, it sees fault lines in the continuous historical landscape. Uniformitarianism should be the historian's method and Thomas has been guided by catastrophism. King therefore has written a book to set matters right.

King agrees of course that things do change in medicine. Theories, for example, come and go. The black bile of Galen, the archaism of van Helmont or the immunoglobulins of modern science are all rather different conceptually. Not only theories, but also methods may alter in medicine. In the Ancient World the philosophies of the dogmatist and the empiric spawned their corresponding medical sects. In the eighteenth century John Wesley eschewed theory, at least in medicine, whilst physicians, in King's words, chased "an airy insubstantial quality, called hypothesis".

But beneath this phantasmagoria of early medical life, behind the leech, the surgeon's knife, the plague, the palsy and the pox, King has sighted firm ground: "the essential unity of medical thinking throughout the centuries". What always remains, he says, are the problems, the timeless medical questions. "What is the disease from which the patient suffers? How can we identify it? What can we do for it?" Along with these are other questions about cause, prevention or the ethics of the bedside. In *Medical Thinking* King takes examples of such dilemmas from different eras and aims to expose their essential identity.

It should hardly come as a surprise to anyone unfamiliar with scholarship in the history of medicine to learn that, in his earlier work, King has shown his greatest sympathy for the eighteenth century. It is not surprising because he shares his view of culture and its changes with the historians of the Enlightenment. Beneath all custom, tradition, fashion, historical epochs and social diversities both he and they discover immutable human situations. King's doctors are like the characters in Johnson's Shakespeare, not modified "by the accidents, or transient fashions, or temporary opinions". There is more than a little paradox here. King himself has not been above correcting Enlightenment physicians for trying to build comprehensive and systematic medical data. This seems to be the aim of his present book. But is it possible, in the face of historical diversity, to find a general medicine over and above particular ones?

Take for instance the question of diagnosis, which, writes King, "is central to the practice of medicine for it identifies the disease from which the patient suffers". In a mastery essay published in 1931, and called "Epidemiological prognosis", Ludwig Edelstein considered the clinical world of the Greek physician. He suggested that the overwhelming concern of this

craftsman was with prediction, not only of the future course of the illness, but of other relevant events in the patient's life. Diagnosis was but a limited aspect of this greater skill and merely meant determining what was actually happening at the moment in question. The significance of prognosis, moreover, lay not simply in its relation to the physician's physical management of the sickness, but in its psychological power. It was central to the work of the practitioner, who needed to impress his skill on both the patient and the audience gathered in his workshop.

Never again, perhaps, was the ability to prognosticate quite so exalted

as it was in the ancient world. Disease, he is saying, is finally a moral category and, though he might repudiate the corollary, social classification, King, unwittingly, seems to support the radical suggestion that diagnosis has become central to medicine today because medical knowledge is now a system of social control.

King, I think, would reject this conclusion drawn from his own premises, for though he recognizes a social component in disease definition he also distinguishes an unconstructed element, the "pure clinical entity". He cites as an example the Stokes-Adams attack, a clinical episode characterized

by disorders with the sign of Scorpio. The result, of course, was that the patient, conversely any clinical entity was a venereal *meant* syphilis. It was another "thought style" for the venereal diseases to be distinguished from the different clinical entities from syphilis. For Fleck the timeless clinical entity was very much time-related.

By ignoring context, then, King appropriates the past to the present and insists on the continuity of the medical confrontation. To do this he regards the highly theoretical language of the past as though it were neutral, description equally applicable to present situations. Richard Morton was a seventeenth-century physician who wrote a treatise on consumption called *Phthisiologia*. Modern pathologists describe one of the characteristic features of this disease as post-mortem as the tubercle. "The central portions of the lungs are ordinarily become necrotic and when the lesions are large the necrotic material is coughed up." With these gross findings, says King, "Morton was familiar". But what Morton actually says is "that a crude Tubercle Swelling is bred from the obstruction some glandulous part of the Lungs, or Water is separated from the Blood and so likewise the Humour that is shut up not being any more renewed an influx of fresh Humour does by degrees grow hard and dry from its natural Heat of the part". It is this latter event which King identifies with necrosis. But necrosis is not a pure descriptive term at all but the product of nineteenth-century pathological theory and has implicit within it the idea of cell death. Morton could not describe necrosis in tubercles in the lung because it implies a concept of life he could not have held. King's empirical account can no more jettison its own "thought style", cell theory, than Morton can describe his post-mortem findings in phthisis in anything other than humoral terms. In his attempt to retrieve the past and attack the hubris of authors like Thomas, who see all earlier medicine as a mistake generated by Irrationality, King leans over too far backwards. He assumes that because doctors in the past were rational their actions and descriptions have some ultimate meaning which is the same as ours.

To defend the rationality of the past against naive scientism need not mean showing it to be like the present. Anglo-American historians of medicine have, in recent years, become aware of the relevance to their work of the views of the French disciples of Gaston Bachelard, notably Georges Canguilhem and Michel Foucault. Briefly, the challenge offered by these authors has been to present a very sophisticated theory of intellectual discontinuity. Timeless clinical experience they replace with the conception that physicians in the nineteenth century redefined life, function, disease and death in terms of a wholly new bedside perception. Perhaps for Claude Bernard writing the 1840s, all former medicine is just nonsense was no-nonsense. King must find no reference to these writers so self-evident does continuity seem to him.

Not that he needed to plunge into such recondite waters to discover another fierce but rather different attack on the Enlightenment perspective. Clifford Geertz's essays have had much to say in this regard on the persistence of a universalist outlook in anthropology, for example in the fruitless search for the characteristic forms of religious life and experience. In medicine such a search is carried on by those who believe in a medical world over and above the real historical world in which people live. In this Platonic realm diagnosis, disease, life and death have essential meanings which can be teased out of the contingent historical settings regardless of whether the doctor were a toga, a wig, or a top-hat. But meaning is only given to these terms by the way they are used in real historical situations. Diagnosis as understood by the Greek physician and the consultant cardiologist share, at most, a couple of similarities, but the real meaning of diagnosis is what these doctors are doing in their own culture.



"The Muscles", an engraving from De humani corporis fabrica libri septem by Vesalius, is included in A Catalogue of Sixteenth Century Medical Books in Edinburgh Libraries (298pp. Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. £45. 0 85405 039 6) compiled by D. T. Bird.

In medicine. In the eighteenth century other skills were paramount. In 1751, an Edinburgh professor lectured to his students on the case of a poor and sick lowlander on the case of a poor and sick lowlander. The man was recorded as being a case of "weak stomach" and, though formerly healthy, "had a fever in the year 1740 and has never been well since; sometimes after that he was cold house". Central to the physician's role here seems to be the task of explaining the meaning of the patient's illness. The diagnostic category "weak stomach" after all hardly indicates the need for recondite pathological knowledge. The experienced eighteenth-century practitioner had to know how to relate symptoms to a wider moral universe, to show how cold and how the physician produced rheumatism and how the stagnation of the natural economy produced gaol fever.

Though always an aspect of practice, diagnosis has only achieved its present prominence within the past two hundred years. The dictum of Lord Horder, that the most important thing in medicine is diagnosis, the second most important thing is diagnosis, and the third most important thing is diagnosis, is not timeless, but a twentieth-century pronouncement. Where then does modern medicine's preoccupation with diagnosis arise? King suggests an answer: "the history of calling a condition a disease rests ultimately on the values of

Noel Coward: for...

Nicholas Shrimpton

JOHN LAHR

Coward the Playwright
179pp. Methuen. £7.95 (paperback). £3.95. 0413 468402

Noel Coward was a player not a gentleman, and he never forgot it. Others might succumb to the impression of aristocratic hauteur which he sustained so convincingly for more than half a century. He himself regarded the highly theoretical language of the past as though it were neutral, description equally applicable to present situations. Richard Morton was a seventeenth-century physician who wrote a treatise on consumption called *Phthisiologia*. Modern pathologists describe one of the characteristic features of this disease as post-mortem as the tubercle. "The central portions of the lungs are ordinarily become necrotic and when the lesions are large the necrotic material is coughed up." With these gross findings, says King, "Morton was familiar". But what Morton actually says is "that a crude Tubercle Swelling is bred from the obstruction some glandulous part of the Lungs, or Water is separated from the Blood and so likewise the Humour that is shut up not being any more renewed an influx of fresh Humour does by degrees grow hard and dry from its natural Heat of the part". It is this latter event which King identifies with necrosis. But necrosis is not a pure descriptive term at all but the product of nineteenth-century pathological theory and has implicit within it the idea of cell death. Morton could not describe necrosis in tubercles in the lung because it implies a concept of life he could not have held. King's empirical account can no more jettison its own "thought style", cell theory, than Morton can describe his post-mortem findings in phthisis in anything other than humoral terms. In his attempt to retrieve the past and attack the hubris of authors like Thomas, who see all earlier medicine as a mistake generated by Irrationality, King leans over too far backwards. He assumes that because doctors in the past were rational their actions and descriptions have some ultimate meaning which is the same as ours.

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It is this which explains the peculiar pattern of his literary career. Most writers can be seen developing or declining as their work proceeds. Coward's output, by contrast, is an extraordinary hotchpotch of the good, bad and indifferent. One of the masterpieces, *Hay Fever*, is written almost before he has properly started, in 1924. Another, *Private Lives*, seems oddly isolated in 1929, separated from its great precursor by such indifferent items as *Semi-Monde*, *The Marquis*, *Howe*, *Char* and *Blithe Spirit* (for which the Stewells never forgave him) or in a playlet like *Hands Across The Sea* (which rattled the Mountbattens). Coward is a satirist. But in his major plays his purposes are very different. He made his attitude to the social world of those plays, the upper-class life of the 1920s and 30s, very plain in his second volume of autobiography, *Future Indefinite*.

I cannot agree with contemporary social commentators that they were so appallingly decadent and degraded. It is true that there was a certain flush discernable on the face of High Society - High Society in the Long Island, Paris, Riviera sense - but on the whole those poor maligned years were not nearly so bad as they are now made out to have been. There were worse things going on in the twenties and thirties than the casual amorality in the South of France and ostentatious parties at the Ritz. The Lido contributed less to future chaos than Geneva, and the propaganda of the Comintern throughout the modern world swayed our destinies far more than the perfumes of Chanel.

For critics and producers who wished to revive Coward's work in the Brecht-dominated years of the 1960s, such opinions were inconvenient and it was simpler to present him as a satirist. The fact remains that he detaches himself, not in order to attack, but in order to observe, and laughs at what he loves.

For Anglo-Irish writers of high comedy, like Goldsmith or Congreve or Wilde, such detachment is relatively observed, twenty years earlier, "Who can be long in England without becoming sentimental?" As our most English (that is, least Irish) great writer of high comedy, it was only to be expected that Coward would suffer from the vice. The theatre in which he grew up did nothing to diminish the tendency. "Theatrical people," Coward remarks in the first volume of his autobiography, "are notoriously not to deny the importance of the faculty of emotion, and frequently victimised by their own foolish sentimentality." Coward fell victim

again and again, often devoting extraordinary craftsmanship and style to the music of the damp hanky.

Occasionally, it must be said, the muse returned the compliment, most notably at that moment in the balcony scene of *Private Lives* when Coward's comic purposes require him to encapsulate a convincing *coup de foudre* in less than twenty lines:

You're looking very lovely you know, in this damned moonlight. Your skin is clear and cool, and your eyes are shining, and you're growing lovelier every second as I look at you. You don't hold any mystery for me, darling, do you mind? There isn't a particle of you that I don't know, remember, and want.

Only a writer who'd been wasting his talents for five years turning out *Blithe Spirit* and *The Marquis* could have touched the tear-driets quite so swiftly, and then maintained the momentum on which his comedy relies.

Reciprocal effects of this kind are rare, however. More normally sentiment needs to be overcome or suppressed. The best antidote is detachment and in the four or five plays which continue to matter this is just what Coward achieves. "Just" is the appropriate word because it is so easy to exaggerate the effect involved into hostility or satire. Kenneth Tynan fell into this trap in the eloquent "Tribute to Mr Coward" which he published in 1953:

He began, like many other satirists (Evelyn Waugh, for instance), by rebelling against conformity, and ended up making his peace with it, even becoming its outspoken advocate.

Certainly the Coward of the 1950s lost his sense of detachment. Whether that attitude had ever amounted to satire, however, is another matter. In so far as *The Vortex* is a social rather than psychological play (which isn't very far), and in the comic problem play *Easy Virtue* (frankly copied from Pinero and subsequently repudiated), Coward is a satirist. In a review sketch like *The Swiss Family Wilhelm* (for which the Stewells never forgave him) or in a playlet like *Hands Across The Sea* (which rattled the Mountbattens) Coward is a satirist. But in his major plays his purposes are very different. He made his attitude to the social world of those plays, the upper-class life of the 1920s and 30s, very plain in his second volume of autobiography, *Future Indefinite*.

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obliged to practice reserve and deceit, to stand aside from the conventional. More simply still, the manspining of all the great plays is heterosexual adultery - a topic which Coward was able to regard with disinterested curiosity.

Just as important, however, is that humble suburban background which seems so to restrict Coward's intellectual scope. The darling of the cocktail set had his roots in Clapham and Sutton. Elegantly though he sported his evening dress on grand occasions, he never quite lost the sense of being present as a member of the band. Coward threw himself into the life of the English upper class with enthusiasm, but he did so with his eyes open. His political judgment was never subtle, being chiefly based on the popular patriotism of his Edwardian childhood. But there were no signs here of fashionable flirtation with fascism or with Stalin. When, in 1945, their own names turned up on a Nazi death-list, Rebecca West cabled Coward: "My dear - the people we should have been seen dead with." The grisly accolade was by no means undeserved.

Sentimentality and snobbery are two of the great faults charged to Coward's work. The major plays, it seems to me, avoid them very deftly. But when we come to the third main accusation, detachment is no longer a sufficient defence. Are Coward's plays, even the best of them, not trivial, empty, slight? What purpose does his disengaged observation serve? Is there anything here which justifies his own suggestion that some of them will "go into the history of comedy like a play by Congreve or Wilde?"

John Laahr's brisk survey of Coward the playwright offers a number of answers to this fundamental question. Echoing Ivor Brown, he argues at one point that the plays express "the metaphysical exhaustion behind the twenties binge", and do so even in their form:

Unlike their plot-heavy antecedents, Coward's characters live comparatively plotless lives. Although Coward's comedies are well-made, the life they depict has lost its thru-line.

Elsewhere he goes beyond this general suggestion of moral void to more specific interpretation. *Hay Fever* is a specific interpretation. *Hay Fever* is a discussion of role-playing. *Present Laughter* is a guilty account of charm. *Private Lives* embodies the sense of metaphysical exhaustion. *Design for Living* confronts the issues of success and abnormal sexuality (but fails), and *Blithe Spirit* "acts out Coward's fantasy of homosexual torment and triumph".

Though there are some better points here than the flashy prose style might lead one to expect, the book still seems to me to miss the heart of Coward's achievement (in the end, indeed, it is driven back on to the conventional praise of him as an all-round "phenomenon"). If that achievement is not an expression of homosexual torment or metaphysical exhaustion, however, what is it?

The answer, in my view, begins to emerge when one asks what values the major plays articulate. Discussion of this question conventionally begins and ends with Amanda's observation in *Private Lives* that "believe me, being kind to everyone, and giving money to old beggar women, and being as gay as possible." It is a catchy motto. But it is also, unfortunately, a deeply misleading summary of the implications of Coward's work. Coward the man undoubtedly believed in being kind to everyone and giving money to old beggar women. The heroes and heroines of his plays, on the other hand, from the all-pervasive *Blithe Spirit* to the cynical Charles Condomine in *Blithe Spirit*, all demonstrate the supreme importance of pursuing one's own pleasure to the top of one's bent and not giving a rap for anyone else in the process.

Stick this makes Coward sound like an immoralist. It is important to state the principle in whose name such behaviour is advocated. At times it expresses itself as wit or self-knowledge or art. But fundamentally the value involved is vitality. Take *Hay Fever*, for example, where the theme is

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already precociously vivid. The Bliss family invite four guests to their house for the weekend and proceed to treat them abominably. A vicious combination of casual neglect and deliberate embarrassment rapidly drives them from the premises. We feel for the victims but do not side with them. The Bliss family are rude but they have it in them to enjoy spontaneously, self-indulgently and vivaciously. They stand for life, and pomposity and timidity (however pitiable) are equally offences against it. As early as 1924 Coward is giving memorable comic expression to the ethic which was Walter Pater's principal bequest to the modernist generation.

This sense that life must urgently be relished and that dullness has no claims upon us is developed five years later in *Private Lives*. Here art (or at least theatricality) is replaced by sex as the embodiment of vitality. Elyot and Amanda are engaged in a search for the true life of the emotions. At the beginning of the first act, harassed by a previous encounter, both choose to see love as a kind of refreshing sleep. "Love," in Elyot's words, "is no use unless it's wise and kind and undramatic." This devilizing undercurrent of the play, briskly and comically, proceeds to overturn. In the last scene the dull are shown to be just as quarrelsome as the passionate, without their compensating zest.

Design for Living, in 1932, marks the arrival of complex plot in Coward's comedy but in other respects is disappointing. The protagonists are both lovers and artists. Unfortunately, unlike Elyot Chase or Judith Bliss, they do their loving and creating off-stage. Coward corrects this misjudgment in *Present Laughter*, once again, in *Hay Fever*, using theatricality as his emblem of the vital. The creativity expressed by Garry Essendine's production team has an importance which can legitimately brush aside the tyranny of conventional emotion. *Blithe Spirit* takes a similar theme but adds an extraordinary symbolic dimension. Here death is spoken for by the literally dead, while Madame Arcati's professional morbidity is wittily transformed into a mode of vivacious explicitness. The quick and the dead explicitly confront each other and the quick, as always in Coward's major plays, achieve an exultant victory.

The emotions engendered by such comedies as these, inevitably, I think, remind us of a famous tribute to some earlier exercise in the same genre. Here are indeed characters who break through no laws or conscientious restraints because they know of none, who have got out of Christendom into the land where pleasure is duty and the manners perfect freedom. And like Lamb returning from the comedies of the Restoration, we can return from Coward's plays to our cage and our restraint: "the fresher and more healthy for it". These are plays which leave us, however briefly, with a sense of how eyelids, urgent and delightful life. It is time the critics said so.

GRAHAM PAYNE AND SHERIDAN MORLEY (Editors)
The Noel Coward Diaries
699pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £15. 0 297 781421

Noel Coward started keeping a diary in 1941 and stopped at the end of 1969. What he wrote has been collected and edited by Graham Payne and Sheridan Morley. I admire their industry, while sometimes doubting the accuracy of their facts. If, as they claim, Benjamin Britten was born in 1930, then *Peter Grimes* is a short-trousered work of genius.

The diaries record a life largely given over to the theatre and the company of friends. Much time is spent slacking name upon name. These were years in which Coward's reputation slumped and then rose as he discovered his great gift as a cabaret singer, and as his earlier works were revived. Though his fortunes changed, his opinions remained fixed - for the retention of the death penalty, against the prosecution of homosexuals, in favour of the monarchy and the Conservative Party. His political insights are not great: "I am fairly certain that history will vindicate him [Anthony Eden] completely." Though his worst contempt is directed against journalists, his own mind is journalistic, taking things at face value.

The editors admit only to minor censorship, but it is hard to believe that any was necessary, for the effect of the diaries is not at all intimate. Coward was clearly writing for eventual publication, and in a style which aims to give nothing away. He is not interested in describing people or events, preferring instead to concentrate on his own variations of feeling. His reaction to most people is to spray them with adjectives like a gardener running riot with a pesticide: "Marvellous", "beautiful", "darling", "wonderful" goes the gun, smothering sense. Anyone, however complex or interesting, gets indiscriminately coated in these words, or, as likely, in their opposites. He seems entirely without real curiosity about people. Nothing ever puzzles or discomforts him, nothing gives him pause, for he long ago decided he believes in something called "human nature" which apparently explains everything. This hunky belief allows him a confident breadth of generalization: "Ah me! The Indies. God bless them. What silly cunts they make of themselves."

Coward himself claims a happy and equable temperament. Large parts of the diaries are concerned with the failure of the marriage of Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier, yet he seems to be imaginatively incapable of

understanding their problems. Every encounter with them is reduced to a stale chant of "Poor Vivien!" or "Poor Larry!" He finds it noticeably difficult to understand other peoples' suffering because in his own life he is so sure that horse-sense is always enough. The result in him, both as a man and a writer, is a disfiguring vein of bitterness, which seems to come from a feeling of being excluded, as if the darker and more disturbing side of life were something which was closed to him. He resents in other people an ease of access to profounder feelings which he cannot share. Generous always to anyone who brings him bad news: Arthur Miller is "boring and embarrassing", Graham Greene "tedious, pretentious... most unpleasant", Tennessee Williams "intolerable". Claiming, in his attacks on other writers that what he dislikes is "dreary" intellectualism, what he actually seems afraid of is thought.

Stuffed full of Professor Niehans's

bull-glands, Coward cannot see that life is not simple. How else to explain his extraordinary confidence, his repeated assurance that he understands the world? Robert Ardrey arrives as the owner of "the most extraordinary brain I have ever encountered", and Coward so admires his book *Thunder Rock* that he is able to claim that "he book disposes of Freud, Marx and organized, or indeed, any religion". The sense of relief is palpable. It is as if by wishing it life will go away.

Only the monarchy offers Coward a whole-hearted feeling of comfort.

Surely the alliance between royalty and showbiz has been one of the oddest features of Britain's imperial decline.

Low Grade's hand seems permanently to be clasping Queen Elizabeth's in some symbiotic bond. Perhaps the two factions recognize in each other a dependency for their survival on indiscriminate praise and masses of publicity. For whatever reasons the Windsors found in Coward their court

poet. They offered him no challenge. With them he knew his place and member of the family, however minor, failed to impress him with the "radiance" and good sense.

Was there ever a writer who had trouble putting words on paper, or was in the act of writing suffered less self-doubt? Partly, he tells us, it is because of "my extraordinary facility for writing dialogue", but over and above that, he just can't help being good. "Which We Serve" is "a rattling good movie", "let's face it, most beautifully written", *Star Quality* is "nice and long... and also I think very good". *After The Ball* is "very good indeed". *Home and Colonial* is merely "very good", but *A Song At Twilight* is "really a rouser", "it is a good play I really believe."

Reading such stuff (and its opposite of Lilli Palmer "I have never written with such a stupid bitch"; of Michael Redgrave "slow, pompous, but obstructive"; of Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice-Davies "miserable little tart"; of the Beatles "talentless... bed-mannered little shits"), I found myself reminded all the time of Evelyn Waugh, a much cleverer man, but one whose diaries similarly illuminate his work. In a brilliant essay, Michael Frayn once observed that like all young comic novelists he began by imitating Waugh (just perhaps as most elite boulevardiers start by imitating Coward), until he realized that Waugh's style was based on a set of beliefs which Frayn did not share. Waugh's comedy comes from the pretence that man is a hopeless victim of fate - or God as Waugh prefers to call it - and that any efforts he makes on his own behalf on earth are doomed to farcical failure. There is no end to the ludicrousness and stupidity of man. Only when Frayn realized he did not himself believe this, was he liberated to write in his own, considerable comic style. Waugh's diaries have always seemed to me the spade-work he did to develop a style for the novels; from the mountain of personal unpleasantness glean a few perfect jokes, jokes so exquisite that they could only be achieved by all the monstrous labour of a daily diary. Here now is Coward's spade-work, but sadly there are no jokes, or none worth repeating. Unlike Waugh he never wrote a single, truthful masterpiece - I am thinking of *A Handful Of Dust* - which vindicates the silliness of so much else. Like Waugh, Coward takes up an unenviable position in the face of a changing world. Like Waugh, he believes ridiculous things. But Coward, crucially, lacks the cleverness to see that that is what he is doing. Waugh surveys the whole of life and finds it disappoints him. Coward doesn't dare to look.



The cover of *The Play Pictorial* magazine showing Noel Coward and Gertrude Lawrence in *Private Lives* in 1936. From Advertising: Reflections of a Century by Brian Holmes (324pp. Heinemann, £20. 0 344 34540 7), to be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

THE PLAY PICTORIAL "PRIVATE LIVES"

FICTION

Waiting in the queue

D. J. Enright

TADEUSZ KONWICKI

The Polish Complex
Translated by Richard Lourie
211pp. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux/Faber. £7.25.
0 374 23548 1

It is helpful of the translator of this work to alert us in his introduction to the nature of the Polish complex. It resides, he says, in a trinity consisting of Poland's relationship with Russia, with the West, and with itself. Otherwise, since a pun seems to be involved here, one might have thought the complex to be simply masochism.

The novel is a commodious form, quite capable of sustaining a fair degree of philosophy, history, politics and other schematisms. The present example of that generous genre is not exactly avant-garde, but bears distinct traces of what were once thought of as modes of modernism. Notably, expressionism, with its mixture of aspiration and menace: the characters here (though most of them do have names) could as well be called by such typifications as The Writer, The Worker, The Student, The Informer, The Anarchist, The Peasant Woman. The last of these, incidentally, doubles for The Ex-Actress, while The Anarchist is a young Frenchman, fascinated by Poland's eternal unrest: "He's seen Polish films, he knows about the Polish school."

It is Christmas Eve, and these characters are standing in a queue outside, sometimes inside, and sometimes in the vicinity of a Jewellery store ("named with no particular finesse: The Jeweller") which may have something to sell other than Soviet samovars if a shipment of rings and precious stones arrives. (It doesn't.) Or, they are standing (or sitting) in "a line": this is an American translation, and - whether through faithfulness to the original or because of the translator's rough-and-readiness - singularly bare of literary graces.

The Writer is also The Narrator, and the Narrator is Mr Konwicki himself, a tormented soul, a tormented Polish Soul. No one seems to like his books, least of all the pretty girls who were forced to read "that tripe of yours in high school", presumably early books, which he barely recognizes, social-realist stuff by the sound of it. These days, he confides, he writes for intelligent extra-terrestrial beings, beings "from the more elegant neighbourhoods of the Lord God's metropolis" better and wiser than we, because he is "bored by communication with my fellow men,

my fellow wise men and idiots, my fellow prophets and scoundrels, my fellow torturers and victims". As for himself, "I hate my prose. I hate it like a ghost, a bad memory, like pangs of conscience" - It is "like some sort of discharge oozing from my organism". And so it is. The novel is about wounds - it is about Polish history, how could it not be? - and to add to the effect the narrator is in physical pain much of the time and even suffers a curious, perhaps symbolic heart attack at one point. But the tearing off of bandages grows monotonous. The wounds thus displayed are real, and various, but they tend to look much the same.

Also in the queue are Kojran, who professes to have been ordered to shoot Konwicki in 1951, and his friend Duszek, who used to work with the secret police and helped to put Kojran in prison in 1952. "Why bring it up", mutters Duszek. The wheel of fortune is no novelty here: who can keep up with its turns? Duszek, a giant clad in old-fashioned clothes, is the comic, given to uttering national apophthegms: "A Pole loses his temper when he has to wait", "A Pole gets sleepy when he thinks", "When evening comes, a Pole starts reminiscing", "When a Pole gets laid, he gets worried", "When a Pole sees a balcony, he wants to jump", "Give a Pole freedom, he'll outdo everyone". The maxim "When a Pole complains, he feels better right away" comes from the suspected agent provocateur, in imitation of Duszek; but it is the narrator himself, on the last page of the novel, who utters, with extra animus: "When a Pole flies into a fury, then woe to blind, slothful, venal Europe."

Konwicki, or the narrator called Konwicki, says that he had planned to

be a cosmopolitan writer, an agent of universalism, an Esperantist of the spirit, concerning himself solely with the soul of *Homo sapiens*, but through the intervention of some wicked fairy he has been turned into "a stubborn, ignorant, furious Pole". He flounders back and forth through his little homeland's miserable history. Poland was a good, noble country, dedicated to lofty ideals, or (in a characteristically masochistic phrase) to "positive, exemplary, copybook values". And what happened? Those ideals led to its undoing. "Our entire Golgotha comes from that untimely eruption of individualism." It is a case of Look here, upon this picture, and on this; the other picture being of "our sister Russia": despotism, ridiculous defeats in war, barbarity, corruption, poverty, indolence, stupidity... But Russia had the luck. Russia emerged as a vast and powerful state.

And yet, and yet... While it is true to say that nobility will always succumb to villainy and freedom die at the hands of those who have none, it is equally true - or, "one may equally say" - that righteousness will conquer, freedom will prevail over slavery. "But let us remember that the good is free like a cloud in the sky and that evil is swift as lightning." We should remember better if we understood better. If only the narrator's musings had the clarity of Duszek's one-liners. Ah, but Konwicki has already told us that, although they may understand his sentences when translated, his fellow men on the Tiber, the Seine and the Hudson will not truly understand him or his fate - "because I am a Pole". Moreover, they should thank God that they don't understand him, yet.

Universalism seems to have



Polish costumes from the end of the sixteenth century, based on drawings by Jan Matejko; from *A Republic of Nobles: Studies in Polish History to 1864*, edited by J. K. Fodorowicz, to be reviewed in a future issue of the TLS.

recalling some of Tolstoy's scenes. This was the time when, as the translator puts it, Poland was identified by its romantic poets as "the Christ of nations", crucified yet with the hope of resurrection. Konwicki mocks the romanticism, but only lightly, seeking to recapture the dreams of the young patriot colonel, Zygmunt Minceyko, his precursor by some eighty years, as yet unburdened with the weight of experience and unpoisoned by disappointment. Zygmunt flunked that most of his promised volunteers have dispersed to their work in the fields and, after an ambush that ends in fiasco, is betrayed to the Cossacks by peasants greedy for reward. The section ends with "that question which is always with us" - "Was it worth it?"

The *Polish Complex* is a prime example of the kind of novel, ambitious and admirable in its intentions, that makes the reader feel guilty for not liking it more wholeheartedly. And not merely because it was hanned in its native country, for it does have a dark unsparingly about it, even a tarnished but genuine nobility. No doubt it is foolish to wish that the vitality, the hope, could begin to measure up to the disillusionment and self-castigation, or to regret that, far from a study of the problem children of Europe, what emerges seems much like a study in problem geriatrics. Apart from tinges of mysticism, the "indiscipherable visions" mentioned in the book's closing paragraph - it is not Christmas Eve for nothing - the most we are offered in the way of cheer, and almost as an afterthought, is a variety of stoicism. On the penultimate page there is a remark, or a Polish joke, about the rightness of instinct, set off by a welder's vulgar retort to Konwicki's request that he should be good enough to turn his flame-thrower on him: "One must live. There is some sense to all this senselessness."

The novel's most vivid passages and its warmest characters occur in the flashbacks to the failed rebellions of 1830 and 1863. The latter and lengthier of these (it comes earlier in the book) is especially fine, a brilliant evocation.

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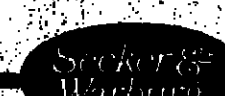
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Doubling the Vision

Anne Duchêne

BRUCE CHATWIN

On The Black Hill
249pp. Cape. £7.50.
0 224 01980 5

Bruce Chatwin's first novel - and his third remarkable book in five years - disconcerts expectations: something one imagines by now this author very much enjoys doing. After the harshly and brilliantly exotic expanses of *In Patagonia* and *The Viceroy of Oudah*, he has elected to study a few square miles of hill-farm in Radnorshire, and the lives of the twin brothers who farm it.

The writing has the emblematic self-sufficiency of the late David Garnett. The sense of place is flawlessly invoked, usually in paragraphs of only a few lines ("Overhead, puffy clouds were streaming out of Wales, their shadows plunging down the slopes of gorse and heather, slowing up as they moved across the fields of winter wheat"); but the necessary presence of the present is never neglected. In 1983, for example, the brothers have a nasty brush with their mother's tax authorities, on which they make since their mother's death before the war and another in 1957, when rather

than pay £5,000 in tax they have to buy a big new tractor and keep it idle in a stable, where they sometimes dust it.

The mixture of the possible and the unlikely with the ironically lyrical is very much in David Garnett's peculiar vein. So is the humour, which gets in everywhere (some set-pieces, such as a local garden party to give thanks for victory in 1918, read like uproarious reportage); and so is the author's amusing himself by pretending to be a loyal slave of the accidental, while in fact he is masterfully pulling all the strings. Anyone who enjoyed being bullied in this way by Garnett will enjoy this book too.

Benjamin and Lewis, the brothers, who are identical twins, are shown over a period of eighty years sharing their work, and also their bed, non-committally, and sharing each other's palms when the other is in danger or distress; Lewis's nose bleeds too when Benjamin is rejected. In 1914, as a conscientious objector, is beaten up in the Army.

They do not invariably share each other's pleasures - Lewis shivers at his brother's relationship with a woman, always abortive with women - but often they do, as when their mother gives them each a Hercules bicycle on their thirty-seventh birthday, on which they make archaeological forays into Wales. Unhappily rebuffed in these, they keep

the more closely to their farm - which is called The Vision, as if challenging reviewers to make too much of the fact - but they never become recluses; their friends include members of the local gentry, the local hippie, and numerous crumbling neighbours, chiefly female, who are often difficult to distinguish under the caked grime and dung.

The book is "about" such concrete, arbitrary details as those suggested here. It may give a fine insight into the founding and tolerance of a small community, and even a series of incidental comments on British social history in this century, but these are certainly not its motives. Its intention is to paint a picture of two men's lives in a particular place. What happens is not really the author's business. Chatwin implies. Love may occur, or violence, or sadness, but his concern is to show the continued existence of the brothers in their parents' house. Sentiment is always checked. Anticipation always baffled, by events. A neighbour may be much nearer her newly dead brother's house or so does that they starve on the leash; but she does get someone in to shoot them, and buries them herself. The charitable, if slightly distended eye suspends judgement, and Radnorshire is seen as every bit as full of bankrupted human madness as Patagonia. Where on earth, one wonders, will Bruce Chatwin go next?

Trivial Fond Records may seem

Nonchalant nothings

Harold Hobson

RONALD HOWARD (Editor)

Trivial Fond Records by Leslie Howard
187pp. William Kimber. £9.50.
0 7183 0418 7

Just over thirty years ago a young actor, bearing a famous name, gave a memorable performance as the blinded, bewildered, wandering soldier in Peter Brook's production of John Whiting's *A Penny For A Song*. When this play was revived by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1962 the sad and puzzled figure had been transformed into an imitation Jimmy Porter, a transformation which made some people doubt Whiting's artistic integrity. The young actor, too, has changed, though without losing any of his troubling questions of sincerity. He acts no longer, but has - in apparently thought not without regrets - to an art gallery in West Dorset. There he has lived, over the years, with his celebrated parent, some of which he

here, reprints. This is the origin of *Trivial Fond Records*, by Leslie Howard, edited by his son.

Leslie Howard, the elegant, nonchalant star of so many light comedies and famous films (including *Gone with the Wind*, which he much resented) was not naturally fitted to be an actor. Just as Nelson was habitually shy and reserved, and he always felt that acting was the most embarrassing thing in the world. His total ease upon the stage, his apparent careless charm, character: not a gift of nature. He was, in some ways more fitted to be a writer, powers of close observation, and could venom the various ways in which an actor could ruin the big scene of one of his fellow-players. In a 1935 essay, devastating passage on the skill with which Jeanne Eagels in *Her Cardboard Lover* could manipulate a show which she had nothing to say in order to divert the audience's attention from those of her colleagues who were at the centre of the stage. He noted things outside the theatre just as closely as he

did those within. As soon as he arrived in New York at the age of twenty-seven he was struck by the number of hideous iron fire-escapes there were on 23rd Street. Could there really, he asked himself, be so much danger of fire in the city?

He wrote articles on such subjects as these for *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker*. He spoke of American clubs, Broadway, the Elevated Railway, of rehearsals, of old actors explaining why they were playing small parts as a special favour, to the management, and, with particular brilliance and humour, psychological insight, of the tormented ecstasy of the first night of triumph. In these sketches Leslie Howard has the lightness of touch, the wit, and the ever so little cynical malice of a prose: J. K. Stephen, or a Thackeray contemplating the prospect of British tourists. He is trivial, of course (and so were they, immortally so), but his airy realization of a time when a big first night (and with a Jack Buchanan and a Gerald du Maurier, a Barrymore were not all first nights big) was as much a sensation as a Wimbledon final, gives a more vivid impression of how people lived and

moved and talked than most serious histories do.

Ronald Howard has linked these various essays both by extracts from his father's diaries and by a narrative of his own. This does not claim to be more than a small thing, but it is a small thing beautifully done. Beside, the public fame of a highly successful career is set a private man perplexed by affection, by doubt, and by temptation. His affection for his son, whom he called Wink, is touching, and his anxiety over Wink's childish problems might serve as a model for many a father.

There are some gestures of Ronald's unease. There is pain when Leslie does not mention in his diary the birth of Ronald's sister; a brief suggestion that the book is dedicated) has to memory Leslie: from potentially dangerous women; and the fact that when Leslie was shot down during the war Ronald wrote some poems which he does not reprint. He gives us instead two others, written "in a somewhat different vein". These things, of course, may mean nothing. One wonders, but does not know.

Trivial Fond Records may seem

The elemental struggle

Geoffrey A. Hosking

VARLAM SHALAMOV

Graphic
Translated from the Russian by John Glad
287pp. W. W. Norton, £10.50.
0 393 01476 2

Even in a country that has not treated its writers generously, Varlam Shalamov's fate has been striking in its harshness. Arrested in 1929 as a student of Moscow University (no one seems to know for what offence), he was sentenced to five years, which he spent in the NKVD's first "muss production" labour camps, on the Vishera and Kama rivers, just west of the Urals. After his release he managed to publish a few short stories and some verse before being picked up again in 1937. Once more he was sentenced to five years, but this time he lasted until 1953, the reason for the long extension being that Shalamov had pronounced Ivan Bunin a "classic of Russian literature", a remark which was construed as "anti-Soviet agitation". (Bunin was at that time living in France, and had not been republished in the Soviet Union or achieved the considerable reputation he now enjoys there.) Most of what we know about Shalamov's life is contained in the stories he passed around in Moscow, and which eventually were properly published in London in 1978. After his belated release, he continued publishing poetry in his homeland, but in order to do so was required to dissociate himself publicly from his *Kolyma* tales. He died only a few months ago, in an old people's home outside Moscow, having lived there for some years, blind and gradually losing the power of speech. One of his few friends was Nadezhda Mandelstam (with whom he is pictured in this book), fellow bearer of precariously rescued testimony from Stalin's age of silence.

John Glad has done us a valuable service in gradually making Shalamov's writings available in English. A few years ago, he brought out a first selection of the stories (reviewed in the TLS of October 17, 1980), and with this second volume nearly half of the known stories will have been translated. There are even one or two items here which were not included in the 1978 Russian edition.

Graphic is an apt title for the collection. Graphic was used by the topographers, who, like Shalamov, patiently mapped out the wastes of Kolyma; its hardness ensured that its marks would not dissolve or wash away with time or weather. "Graphic is carbon that has been subjected to enormous pressure for millions of years and that might have become coal or diamonds. Instead, however, it has been transformed into something more precious than a diamond: it has become a pencil that can record all it has seen. . . . So graphic is memory, tempered by intense and protracted pressure, and this is reflected in the second use to which it is put in Kolyma: to mark the same things tied to the corpse, buried (and, effortlessly preserved) in the permanently frozen soil of the tundra. All guests of the permafrost enjoy life eternal, and are ready to return to it - that we might remove the tugs from their left shirts and find their friends and relatives."

Shalamov's stories are both pitifully preserved memories and also sketches for a map, a geographical record of Kolyma and its strange inhabitants. A whole frozen continent, cut off by hundreds of miles of trackless wilderness from the nearest "free" settlements, this was where, in the 1930s, the NKVD set up its most ambitious slave-labour enterprises to mine the gold and precious minerals that would later be translated into self-regarding dinner tables, or even hard cash if their dissident happens to have an unpublished manuscript handy (thus the pseud is transformed, and his mischief becomes a crime).

The satiric satyr letting fly

Clive Sinclair

JIRI GRUSA

The Questionnaire: Or Prayer for a Town and a Friend
278pp. Blond and Briggs/Frederick Muller, £8.95.
0 85634 134 7

One Friday night I met an old friend in Prague's Staronová Synagogue. We arranged to have supper at the Mátyás Vinárna. I was already halfway through a bottle of Vltava wine when she arrived. "Can't stay," she whispered. "I've left my dissident waiting outside." The personal pronoun, uttered with such emphasis, made me suspect that the Prague gals were now calling themselves dissidents: to gulf well-intentioned visitors. But let us also be unfair to these tourists and suppose that pillow-talk will later be translated into self-regarding dinner tables, or even hard cash if their dissident happens to have an unpublished manuscript handy (thus the pseud is transformed, and his mischief becomes a crime).

"Is Grusa a charlatan?" I enquired of an all-knowing informant, formerly with the BBC's World Service (Czech division). "Certainly not," he replied. "On the contrary, he is a brave man. The *Questionnaire* was first published in Prague by Padlock Editions, which means, of course, that it was not published at all, but distributed in Czechoslovakia. . . . However, it receives notices. Grusa's official review, reprinted by his arrest warrant, contained 'grave calumnies against socialism and the Czech social system.' He was charged with 'initiating disorder.' Married prisoners are allowed only one visitor; his spouse, unfortunately Grusa was living with another woman at the time of his

camp, but that his interests have narrowed, become impoverished and crude. Moral barriers have somehow been pushed aside."

Shalamov's stories exemplify this process. His characters succumb not only physically but also spiritually to hunger, cold, overwork, beatings and exhaustion, until they become obsessively selfish and greedy, ready to betray a comrade for a mouthful of food or a day's rest from the drudgery in the mines. Those few who do try to preserve their dignity are tricked by circumstance or slowly ground down by *force majeure*. Out of sheer hunger a priest eats - and enjoys - the flesh of a dog he had loved. A work team allows a frail young student to go to his death because his inadequate output lowers their daily production figures and thereby threatens their daily bread.

If that were all there was to say about Shalamov there would be little reason for anyone other than historians reading him. We could dismiss him as an example of what he himself asserts, a former convict "engrossed in himself", and "overrating his own sufferings". But at first reading one is hard put to say just what it is that raises Shalamov far above this level. His art? Not entirely, I think. Some of his stories are shaped and chiselled like those of his model, Bunin; some are rather rambling.

Their weaknesses are, however, insignificant beside a kind of chilly nobility of the spirit which genuinely adds something new to our perception of evil. What is it? Shalamov's vision is no moral law, no repentance, no redemption, in fact there is not even hope. "Hope always shackles the convict. Hope is slavery. A man who hopes for something alters his conduct and is more frequently dishonest than a man who has ceased to hope." This last passage gives us a clue: if there is a coherent outlook to be discerned in Shalamov, then it is more akin to eastern mysticism than to Russia's own religious tradition. His stories

are searching and merciless contemplations of absolute degradation in human nature, a kind of preparation for the conclusion that man must renounce all desire and perhaps even individual personal existence. Man is created not in the image of God but in that of animals, trees and rocks. He is the natural equal of Tamara the bitch, who brings up her six pups on scraps of food and sinks her teeth into the leg of a soldier whom she distrusts. Man is the natural equal also of the gnarled and knotty trees produced by the far north, so distorted by frost and wind that their timber is useless except for firewood.

One of the most haunting stories in this collection is entitled simply "Fire and Water". Climbing a rocky forest to collect mushrooms for the camp hospital doctor (for whom all prisoners try periodically to find favours, lest they need him), the narrator is cut off by an autumn torrent, which separates him from the boat in which he and his companions had come upstream. In this story the protagonists are natural forces rather than people. The layman's night are faceless and anonymous, but the campfire is a major participant in the drama. "A saving power", as fire can be when it is tamed. The narrator is also haunted, however, by memories of fire uncontrolled, a town he saw burning in his childhood, a forest he remembers blazing in very human agony: "I have often seen the hippocampic death mask of a tree." Then it was fire which was destructive, and water which might have saved. The primordial elements take on human features and conduct their struggle, while man survives as best he can, now attacked by the one, now protected by the other. Ironically, the camp administration helps man to discover his identity among the elements: when the narrator eventually returns "home", it is to find out that the authorities are far more interested in the return of the boat (which is "socialist property", and to be accounted for) than they are in him (when convicts die, they can always be replaced by further arrests). As so often, Shalamov ends with a

So we end up with concepts which are familiar from Christianity, but in Shalamov seem to have an entirely different origin. His art has a pagan quality which triumphed over his confessed temptation to forget everything that had happened to him in the NKVD's "school of the negative". Something forced him to write it all down. The result is extraordinarily powerful. Individually, some (though by no means all) of the stories may be rambling or misspoken, but taken together, they constitute a graphic map both of Kolyma and of the depths of human demoralization.

Item: Mr Vostarek, another dreamer, dons wings and is launched like a kite so that he looks "like a butterfly from one of his drawings". Such images are subconscious desires made visible, and as such contain more power than the mysterious Jutta Toussner von Wolkenschloss and her cat Fatima. But in Czechoslovakia, it seems, even the subconscious must obey the laws of gravity (the pilots crash-land). Last year, in the *New York Review of Books*, Milan Kundera accused the literature and thereby the State itself. He spoke of the resulting "interior freedom" and how this secret culture gave the intelligentsia strength to resist such concentrated political pressure. He asked, "For how long?" This "interior freedom" is something to be envied, though not the price. Writers such as Kundera and Grusa, at their best, are literary explorers mapping out new territories, forced by circumstances to take crazy risks with their external freedom and with literature itself.

"I have determined not to cross out anything," writes Kepka, and begins very sexily, as if drunk on Shandy, with his preoccupation. Kepka's relationship with Tristram Shandy is obvious enough, but what purpose does it serve? Sterne was a satirist, as is Kepka, but not so much an underminer of conventions as a builder upon the same. If Grusa is a subversive, his mentors are writers and his targets are the purveyors of down-to-earth literature. Like Sterne's book is intensely personal, but because the history he relates in his idiosyncratic fashion is Czechoslovakian it becomes from the political (Kepka's uncle Olin, the Party demonstrating how symbolism and politics are impossible interwoven). Hence the satiric satyr-

becomes willy-nilly a critic of society. His variations on themes set by the Comrade Questioner are as unlikely and as colourful as Gaudin's answer to the Inquiry. "Where do we come from? What are we. Where are we going." In brief, Kepka was a question-bearer, history the book relates, the member of an extraordinary family (ditto), and will end up who knows where (Grusa is currently in West Germany). Next year in Prague, perhaps.

Cross Currents 1982: A Yearbook of Central European Culture, edited by Ladislav Matejka and Benjamin Stolc (379pp, Michigan: Ann Arbor, 0 930042 43 3) was published recently. It includes articles by Central Europe, "Looking for a Center", Roman Szporluk on "Defining Central Europe", Power, Politics, and Culture", Stanislaw Baranczak on "The Independent Publishing Movement in Poland", H. Gordon Skilling on "Samizdat: A Return to the Pro-Gutenberg Era?", Harold B. Segal on "Czeslaw Milosz and the Landscape of Exile", Ingo Seidler on "Who is Elias Canetti?" with translations of aphorisms from *Die Prophet des Menschen*, Ivo Vidan on "Kleza's Glembya Cycle in Its European Context", Josef Skvorecky on "American Motifs in the Work of Bohumil Hrabal", Peter Petry on "Slovak Surrealism as a Parable of Modern Uprootedness", and Dana A. Rothe on "Rilke's Early Contacts with Czech and Jewish Prague". George Gibian introduces translations of Jiri Orten's "Elegies"; other poems translated include a selection from the *Anthology of East European Poetry*, edited by Emery George, to be published this year. The year book also contains an interview with Milan Kundera, conducted by Alain Finkielkraut, and a conversation between A. J. Liehm and Tadeusz Konwicki.

Behind the lines

Robert Hewison

The theme of the Frankfurt Book Fair this year is religion: that must be because Bibles have always been best-sellers. From October 6 to 11 more than 5,000 publishers will be trying to interest each other - and assorted booksellers, librarians and literary agents - in some 280,000 titles. These statistics alone should warn the nominal source of all this effort, the author, to stay well away. Confronted by the sheer physical size of the fair, with stand after stand stretching into infinite rows through hall after hall in the babel of a hundred languages, the individual writer - unless he is being fêted by a group of rich publishers for selling a million copies or more - will be so appalled that he may never want to put pen to paper again. What price literature, when the official organizers describe your works as "handy media packets, sold as books"?

It can be daunting for the dealers too. The literary agent Ed Victor, though a keen supporter of Frankfurt, finds it "a manic-depressive experience. The one or two pet projects you have with you seem to fade into insignificance." Yet the meat and drink of the fair is, as Michael Turner of Associated Book Publishers put it, "lots and lots of little deals about lots of little books" and its truly international nature makes it ideal for the buying and selling of translation rights, and for the complex business of arranging co-editions.

Some of the deals are not so little. Ed Victor has in his briefcase the synopsis of David Wallace's *Encyclopedia of the Olympics*, in preparation for the Los Angeles games of 1984. Buyers have already been found in Britain, America and France; in Frankfurt he will be looking for publishers in Eastern Europe (where sport substitutes for religion) who might never have considered such a book.

The Wallace synopsis (and that of another traveller in the same briefcase, the memoirs of Roman Polanski) is a reminder that not all the 280,000 books on display have actually been written. Some titles indeed may not even have been commissioned, and exist only in the mind of some publisher, and on the cover of his expensively produced dummy. After all, there is no time to read anything at Frankfurt. No one I spoke to was prepared to name names, but all confirmed that such flimsy pieces of non-fiction do turn up. However, at Secker and Warburg Tom Rosenthal, preparing with a certain air of grim determination for his twenty-second consecutive visit, was confident that "you can always smell the dummy book a mile off".

Yet, as Rosenthal also said, there is "a frothy, evanescent quality" about Frankfurt which makes extrave deals possible. Everyone goes to Frankfurt to sell: someone must also be ready to buy. While the rights managers work their way through their crowded schedules the talk will be about the Big One, the unknown book by the unknown author which is going to sell a million next year. In spite of the world recession which has led to a reduction in the number of American publishers attending, Frankfurt itself remains the Big One among book fairs, both in quantity and quality. It may well be true, as Rosenthal warns, that "there is a tendency sometimes for the hot book of this year's Frankfurt to be the remainder of tomorrow", but that is next year, and so on you're not the author, who cares?

The most forthright statement at the Edinburgh Festival's conference on the State and the Arts - the nearest thing to a literary event the organizers of what claims to be "the world's most comprehensive arts festival" could arrange - came from the Minister for the Arts, Paul Channon. Asked what he would do if the Arts Council did something with which he strongly disagreed, he replied, "I would say in public immediately, and get rid of the present members of the Arts Council at the earliest opportunity." It is typical, however, of the actual relationship between the State and the Arts that he added almost at once that it was highly unlikely that such a situation would ever occur. Members of the Arts Council are ministerial appointees, and though Mr Channon may be scrupulous about the irrelevance of his personal taste in artistic matters, his selection of new members of the Council and of a new Secretary-General will follow his and his party's political predilections.

The state, rather than the Arts, formed the true focus of the two-day conference, and there was an unusually high level of participation from the political parties: Channon, affable, but with his foot hovering dangerously near his mouth; Roy Hattersley, the shadow Home Secretary and man of letters; and David Steel, who seized the opportunity to launch a proposal for the creation of a Ministry of Culture, part of the Liberal party's new manifesto for the Arts.

The idea of a Ministry of Culture (to be created, perhaps, in 1984) sounds less Liberal than intended, for Mr Steel was as insistent as his fellow Parliamentarians that the "arms-length principle" in British management of

the Arts would continue to apply. The politicians' protests of aesthetically clean hands and institutionally long arms were greeted with faintly superior smiles from the representatives of the cultural bureaucracies of France and Italy. Unlike Mr Channon, who appears to be walking backwards into admission of the government's political interest in the arts, they see the ideological implications of State patronage as a well-known fact of life.

The French at least had something to be superior about, for the Mitterand government had just doubled state spending on the Arts, but the star of the conference was Sergio Romano, Director of Cultural Relations at the Italian Foreign Ministry. It was clear to him that a nation's choice in the Arts was never spontaneous. It is always conditioned by the dominant taste of the ruling class. "This means that the rebel is always out, the innovator is always out. In Italy, the regional nature of political and artistic life leads to a great deal of electioneering in the distribution of patronage, but far from finding this shocking, Romano saw it as a means of ensuring that administrators were responsive to local needs.

Having made what appeared to be a Marxist analysis of State patronage, Romano then stood his ideas on their head, by launching an attack on those who use culture for political purposes. These he described as an emergent class of "mediators", a "second elite" of cultural administrators who are libertarians (but not liberal) representatives of a conformist leftist generation frozen in the attitudes of 1958. These mediators, he said, are an obstacle to understanding what the public really wants, for they are trying to impose their own culture.

Signor Romano refused to be drawn on what this culture actually was, but his remarks struck a chord in the hall, for the audience contained a considerable number of well-informed arts administrators who might, whatever their political views, be described as "forming Romano's 'second elite'". The interests of the first elite on the platform, and the second elite in the hall did however coincide to this extent: neither was very interested in hearing what the practitioners of the arts they administered had to say. In the final session, "The Arts as a National Asset", Chris Baris of the Writers' Guild rose to protest that none of the artists' organizations had been invited to contribute to the conference, or had even been informed that it was taking place.

The response this drew from the platform - in particular the bluster

from the Edinburgh Festival's Director John Drummond - betrayed the patronizing way in which the patronage of the Arts is conducted. Apart from John Mortimer as Chairman, only two authors, Melvyn Bragg and Peter Ustinov, had a place on the platform. Melvyn Bragg was there as a communicator, and Peter Ustinov as a comic turn. Undoubtedly the conference had its uses for the politicians and the administrators. It was worth having to listen to the public's criticisms of the Edinburgh Festival in exchange for hearing David Steel point out that the Festival subsidized Edinburgh, and not the other way round. But if artists unconsciously convey ideological concerns, so too do the arts administrators, who seem to exclude the artists as far as possible from the government of their own affairs. It is difficult to blame John Mortimer for concluding the conference by saying that he really felt he ought to be at home, writing.

And now for the good news: the BBC, whose recent coverage of literature has not been extensive, has decided to transmit no fewer than ten programmes about books in the space of five days. From October 18 to 23 BBC2 will be presenting *Bookshow*, a literary festival of the air.

This saturation coverage is not an attempt by the BBC to purge itself of its literary responsibilities in one go, but represents a new approach to putting literature on television. *Bookshow's* executive producer, Tom Gutteridge, has rightly observed that not all readers read all books. He therefore argues that a weekly book programme is bound to be either limited, by sticking to one class of book, or fragmented, by jumping from category to category.

Not all literary, therefore, will be expected to watch all programmes.

These have been ingeniously spread across the spectrum, from a "celebrity" cookery book programme from the kitchens of the Savoy through an upmarket literary quiz (Antonia Fraser, John Gross, Salman Rushdie, Angela Carter, Sally Emerson and John Mortimer, who should be at home writing), to profiles of Molly Keane and Paul Theroux. The centrepiece of the sequence will be live transmission of the Booker McConnell prize-giving, introduced by Russell Hurry.

Bookshow will be over in one burst, but it is possible that some of the programmes will serve as pilots for longer-running series. It is to be hoped that there will be some criticism as well as celebrities and celebration: one promised item is an investigative documentary into the book trade.

★ ★ ★

A hundred years ago this month Ben Traven, or Bruno Traven, or Berick Traven Torsvan, or Rat Marut was born. In celebration of the centenary of the author of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, whoever he was, Pennsylvania State University has arranged a grand interdisciplinary conference, with papers on "Marut/Traven as Author of his own works"; "B. Traven's Gay Imaginings of Participating and Suffering" and "Weisse Rose - Regressive Idylle oder soziale Utopie?". Those participating (and, I hope, not suffering) from America, Britain, Switzerland, the two Germanies, Czechoslovakia, Sweden and Israel are to be entertained with "Anecdotes about B. Traven" by Señora Rosa Elena Luján de Traven, who has been described as "one of his alleged widows". The hosts, at least, have no doubts about their identity. Their conference literature proudly announces "Penn State is an affirmative action, equal opportunity university". The conference lasts from October 21-23.

go by the book

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Fifty years on: the start of Times New Roman

The TLS of September 29, 1932 carried the following announcement:

Next week's *Literary Supplement of The Times* will be printed in a new type. This type will be seen for the first time in *The Times* of next Monday, and will thereafter be used also for the *Weekly Edition* of the paper and for the *Educational and the Trade and Engineering Supplements*. The object of the change is to increase the legibility of all these periodicals.

A slight, but very important, difference will be immediately noticed. After one hundred, and thirty-three years (all but one month) *The Times* is again veering towards the "old face".

Thereby hangs an interesting tale in the history of English newspaper printing, which the scholarly research of Mr Stanley Morrison has brought to light. When *The Times* was founded, under the title of *The Daily Universal Register*, on January 1, 1785, it was, like all other London newspapers, printed in "old face". At that year a certain John Bell, bookseller, of the British Library in the Strand (the founder of the *Morning Post*, the *Bell's "Shakespeare"*, and Bell's "British Theatre"), paid a visit to Paris, and saw there the Imprimerie Royale.

He was much taken with it. On his return he set up his own type-foundry, with Richard Austin as punch-cutter, and there he made the first English modern face type. In time that type found its way into English newspaper printing. By 1792 Bell's paper, the *Oracle*, was all printed in modern face, and other papers had begun to adopt it. John Walter, 1, might dub Bell a "vagabond Jacobin", but on November 9, 1799, *The Times* "went modern" in a new type specially designed by the Caslon foundry; and modern it has remained ever since.

It is the privilege, no less than the duty of our own time to go back to the earlier dignity and beauty, and to restore also a better form of the Royal Arms, which is re-cut from the block first used on February 10, 1792.

"*The Times* New Roman" is the new type is called, is not exactly an "old face" type - its serifs, for instance, are sharper than academic strictness would allow to an "old face". But it is not easy to define the type, because it is in very truth new. For the first time in history a newspaper in want of new type has taken no standard pattern, but, beginning at the beginning, designed a new type, exclusively its own. This is the only satisfactory course, since there

are two reasons why no standard type is perfectly suitable to a newspaper. For one of those reasons no printing office in the world is so much responsible as that of *The Times*. The oft-told tale of printing in Printing House Square begins with the first John Walter's first experiment in printing with logotypes - that is with soldered combinations of several letters; and it goes on to the inauguration of the first steam-press, invented by Koenig (1814), the first Applegarth and Cowper press (1827), the first rotary press, also invented by Applegarth, House Square, by Applegarth (1848), and the Walter press (1866). Then the old hand-setting of type began to be superseded; and it was *The Times* which produced the first practical composing machine, invented by Kasstetter (1879), and later came the Wicks composing machine, invented by a member of *The Times* editorial staff, and the origin of the Linotype, Monotype, and Infertype composing machines, which not so very long ago replaced it in Printing House Square. The *Times* itself, therefore, has been the methods of newspaper printing which, by their incredible speed, and which put a strain upon type which no book-printing calls upon it to endure. The printing of a book and the printing of a newspaper are widely different, and newspaper type must be designed for its special purpose.

A watching brief

Anne Duchêne

ELIZABETH TAYLOR
The Last Visitor
BBC TV

Those who tuned in last week to BBC-2's *The Last Visitor*, unaware of Elizabeth Taylor novels, surely because the locale was announced as Seething-on-Sea and the hero's name as Vincent Tumulty, must have had their grosser expectations pretty severely baffled; but so were the politer hopes of those who still hold Elizabeth Taylor in respect as a precise and perceptive novelist, who by virtue of these qualities is also often very funny and frequently disquieting. Her work is very sharply-pointed and honourable, and might have come into higher relief if it had not been

Grave matters

Paul Bailey

JOHN FLANAGAN and ANDREW McCULLOCH

Stiff Options
Theatre Royal, Stratford East

Stiff Options is set in an undertaker's parlour in Slagthorpe, a small town in Lancashire. The establishment belongs to Samuel Stringer, a man accustomed to looking death in the face, and strangely, "Death", in fact, is a word that never, under any circumstances, springs to Samuel's lips. For the people he steers towards the grave and the incinerator have "passed on" or "passed over" or "passed away". They have met their "demise".

Samuel has known hard times. Forty years ago, when the National Health Service was in its infancy, Slagthorpe was a haven for morticians. Business boomed. "Flu" epidemics ensued, and success. Samuel fondly recalls the 1930s, when the demise industry was at its peak: the Golden Age that preceded socialism and a lowering of the mortality rate.

At the start of *Stiff Options*, a sprightly farce by two young actors, John Flanagan, and Andrew McCulloch, Samuel is in an optimistic mood. Mrs Thatcher, fresh from her triumph in the South Atlantic, has now declared war on the B.U.P.A.-less hordes who haunt the nation's hospitals. Each cut-back brings a smile to Samuel's professionally lugubrious features. He is exultant when he reads the vet another cancer research unit has had to close down for lack of funds.

Samuel's only rival in Slagthorpe is the Co-op, since the day of the local undertakers sold his premises to "the finger lickin' chicken people". Stringer & Co and the Co-op are literally fighting to the demise for custom. To this end, Samuel employs his brother-in-law, the put-upon Edgar Winstanley, as his spotter. Edgar has a genuine flair for spotting those on the verge of kicking the bucket. "Edgar

The titles of the six novels to have reached the shortlist for this year's Booker McConnell Prize were announced last week. They are *Silence* (Methuen) by John Arden, reviewed in TLS on August 27; *An Age of Iron* (Hamish Hamilton), reviewed September 17; *The 27th Kingdom* by Alice Thomas Ellis

established under the ascendancy of Elizabeth Bowen and all those lethally fluttering commas. *The Sleeping Beauty*, for 1953 novel, adapted by Thomas Ellis this week, is not one of her best; but it is more than an essay in the decorously Gothic, as it becomes here, and deserves also to be more than a demonstration of how much we lose when we can only watch and occasionally cavedrop.

Elmer Cossey's elegant photography in the end-of-season seaside resort makes watching, in itself, very enjoyable. And someone (can it be Rodney Bennett, the director, who otherwise seems to be making the best of a delicate and difficult job?) so much wants us to enjoy watching that Celia Gregory, the heroine, is as beautiful as most young women ever aspire to becoming; whereas much of the story's tension depends on her having been traumatically scarred in a car-accident. (Her unveiling of a scarred shoulder

knows a hole in the heart when he sees one", his boss declares proudly. A fat, elderly jogger has been under Edgar's helpful inspection for some months, and it is a joyful Samuel who learns early in the play that the man has jogged for the last time.

Samuel decides to take on an assistant in preparation for the great days ahead. The man he hires in error is an East End gangster who is being sought by the Slagthorpe police. Dennis, alias Ronnie Black, is suspected of shooting five men in a nearby pub, four of whom - Samuel later discovers - have been claimed by the Co-op. The corpse that is destined to receive the unique Stringer treatment is that of an unemployed and impecunious Scot, Dennis has no alternative but to join the firm, and it is with his acceptance of Samuel's pittance that the farce really takes off.

Stiff Options functions in that sub-world made immortal by Donald McGill. Instead of low jokes about sex (though there are a few of those), the authors offer low jokes about death and dying. A reference to cancer stops the show at each performance. My main criticism of this delightfully grisly piece is that it sometimes lacks the courage of its own tastelessness, and wanders away from the ever-interesting subject that provides its inspiration. Some of its stuff about Women's Lib seems to have been lacked on for no valid theatrical reason, and the best copper's revelations - the least inventive running gag among scores of good ones - are embarrassingly feeble and heavy-handed. Shorn of some of this detritus, *Stiff Options* will be wholly worthy of its skilled interpreters - Michael Elphick, who twitches to memorable effect as Dennis; Bryan Pringle, whose sepulchral Samuel only lacks a certain manic gleam to make it perfect; Lesley Duff, a lubricious Miss Unemployed, appropriately apocryphal as he calls for the return of the demise penalty, and the matchless Pat Kean, clad in pink dungarees, who plays Slagthorpe's most forbidding theatrical landlady with Wagnerian authenticity.

(Duckworth) reviewed July 2 and *Sour Sweet* by Timothy Mo (André Deutsch), reviewed May 17. *Schindler's Ark* by Thomas Kenally (Hodder and Stoughton), is to be published on October 18 and *Constance or Solitary Practices* by Lawrence Durrell (Faber and Faber), will appear on October 11. The winner of the prize will be announced on October 19.

JOHN FORRESTER is the author of *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis*, 1980.

JOHN FULLER's most recent collection of poems is *Waiting for the Music*, 1981.

DAVID GASCOYNE's *Collected Poems* were published in 1965. His *Journal 1936-37* was published in 1980.

DAVID HARE's most recent play, *Map of the World*, will be performed at the National Theatre early next year.

ROBERT HEWISON's *In Angry Culture* in the Cold War 1945-1960 was published last year.

only encourages thoughts about how vain she must have been before the accident.)

Watching Jeremy Brett is also quite agreeable, of course. Discreet BBC ballyhoo suggests he came back specially from the United States to play the lone and, as it turns out, flawed male, among this story's variously desperate women - the widows, the scarred girl, the mentally retarded girl, the hero's own mother. In fact, his tweeds look so solid and well cut that it takes some time to decide exactly what he was doing, though later one sees there are clues: when one of the widows says that we are all always alone, he murmurs, "No need of God, otherwise", and when the scarred girl asks if he is glad she has been alone into the town he breathes with doggy ardour, "I am, monstrosity", but although it may be to Mr Brett's credit that it takes so long to decide why such a good actor seems like a curate rehearsing *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, the delay does not help to make the action seem less accidental. Perhaps this is partly because his mother, loyally played by Mona Washbourne, is postulated as very possessive and also a bird-watcher, but is given no time to appear in either capacity.

The film, in short, lacks resonance, remains a small chamber without echoes. Some moments recall the original (as when someone describes other people's grief as "the washing up of a meal one hasn't eaten"), and the acting is almost always admirable, notably with Rosalind Shanks, as a marginal but fierce and poignant widow, weeping into her ironing, and when Adam Blackwood and Christine Shaw, among their short appearances with almost dangerous solidity. The principal characters, though, are not invested with more than their conventional appearance, and their moral ambiguities remain unclear: the sad, small, exact universe in which their creator first set them does not emerge. Presumably, it takes ninety minutes of film to do justice to an averagely good short story.

3 Geographers, who say the world's a sphere, Are either ignorant, or mazed with beer, Or liars - or have never read two pages Of any of our novelists or sages Who tell us plainly that the world's more wide.

3 He loathed the promiscuity and publicity of even the good restaurants. The promiscuous feeding gave him a feeling of disgust. So he walked down the beautiful slope to the water again, and sat on a seat by himself, near a clump of strange palm-trees that made a weird noise in the breeze. The water was blue and dancing; and again he felt as if the harbour were wild, lost and undiscovered, as it was in Captain Cook's time. The city wasn't real.

2 Des Weekend kommt - einst war als freier Taga noch, aber nicht mehr als Feiertag, ein Loch in der Zeit, mit eigenem Rhythmus, wo niemand sich kümmert, was sein Nachbar tut. Jetzt braucht man vor allem Zeitung und Radio.

W. H. Auden, "City without Walls", translated by Will Keller

3 Vorsteht sich, dass die Boys das hinausjuben müssen, ein so riesiger Phallus-Triumph, ein an das Frauen freilich nicht in Gedacht hätten.

W. H. Auden, "Moon Landing", translated by Herbert Zand

DAVID PRYCE-JONES's books include *Paris in the Third Reich: A History of the German Occupation 1940-1944*, 1981.

NICHOLAS SHIRMITON is a Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

CLIVE SINCLAIR's most recent collection of stories, *Bedbugs*, was published earlier this year.

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PAUL SMITH is Professor of Modern History at the University of Southampton.

ANTHONY STORR's books include *The Art of Psychotherapy*, 1979.

PHILIP THODY's books include *Robert Graves: A Conservative Estimate*, 1977.

GEZA VERMES is a Reader in Jewish Studies at the University of Oxford.

JOHN WHITE is Professor of the History of Art at University College London.

Competition No 90
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than October 22. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that, the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 90" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on October 29.

1 If in the neighbourhood of the commercial and literary town of Glasgow a race of cannibals has really existed, we may contemplate in the period of the Scottish history the opposite extremes of savage and civilized life. Such reflections tend to enlarge the circle of our ideas, and to encourage the pleasing hope that New Zealand may produce in some future age the Fume of the Southern Hemisphere.

2 He loathed the promiscuity and publicity of even the good restaurants. The promiscuous feeding gave him a feeling of disgust. So he walked down the beautiful slope to the water again, and sat on a seat by himself, near a clump of strange palm-trees that made a weird noise in the breeze. The water was blue and dancing; and again he felt as if the harbour were wild, lost and undiscovered, as it was in Captain Cook's time. The city wasn't real.

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Author, Author

On the colonial than the other side. That states and kingdoms are less vast and grand than ranches, farms and meadows planted land. And that wherever on the world's bald head a province or protectorate is spread, the place straightway to vast proportions jumps or a dose of mumps.

Competition No 86
Winner: Edward Mendelson
Answers:

1 Bei Dirty Dick und Sloppy Joe, da trank man Schnaps nur pur und ging treppauf mit Margy und auch mit Kate, o weh. Und zwei und zwei wie Katz und hat man kein Heim und spiekt: Zuluus, W. H. Auden, "Song of the Master and Boatwain", translated by Ernst Jandl

2 Des Weekend kommt - einst war als freier Taga noch, aber nicht mehr als Feiertag, ein Loch in der Zeit, mit eigenem Rhythmus, wo niemand sich kümmert, was sein Nachbar tut. Jetzt braucht man vor allem Zeitung und Radio.

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W. H. Auden, "Moon Landing", translated by Herbert Zand

Among this week's contributors

PAUL BAILEY's most recent book, *An English Madam*, will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

LUCY BECKETT teaches English at Ampleforth College. Her most recent book is *Parafal*, 1981.

C. R. BOXER's recent books include *Jan Compagnie in War and Peace, 1602-1799: a short history of the Dutch East-India Company*, 1979.

ARTHUR C. DANTO's most recent book is *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, 1981.

MICHAEL DAVIS is the editor of *Evelyn Waugh's Diaries*, 1976.

D. J. ENRIGHT's *Collected Poems* were published in 1981.

JOHN FORRESTER is the author of *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis*, 1980.

JOHN FULLER's most recent collection of poems is *Waiting for the Music*, 1981.

DAVID GASCOYNE's *Collected Poems* were published in 1965. His *Journal 1936-37* was published in 1980.

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ROBERT HEWISON's *In Angry Culture* in the Cold War 1945-1960 was published last year.

PATRICE HIGONNET's *Class, Ideology and the Rights of Nobles during the French Revolution* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN is the Washington correspondent of the *Spectator*.

CHARLES HOPR is a lecturer in Renaissance Studies at the Warburg Institute. He is the author of *Tillan*, 1980.

GEORGEY HOSKING's books include *Beyond Socialist Realism: Soviet Fiction since "Ivan Denisovich"*, 1980.

DAN JACOBSON's most recent book, *The Story of the Stories: The Chosen People and Its God* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON is Professor of French History at University College London.

CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE is a lecturer in the History of Medicine at the Wellcome Institute, London.

HUGH LLOYD-JONES is Regius Professor of Greek at the University of Oxford.

NEIL MACCORMICK is Regius Professor of Public Law at the University of Edinburgh.

ANTHONY PADGEN's *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology work* has just been published.

TORIS PARRY was Professor of German at Manchester University from 1963 to 1978.

JOHN WHITE is Professor of the History of Art at University College London.

to the editor

Public Lending Right

Sir, - From the moment it was published as a Bill, the Public Lending Right Act, 1979, has been notorious for muddle and inconsistency. Writers, myself included, pointed out that it uses the word "books" sometimes to mean the actual, tangible volumes and at other (unsignposted) times to mean what the book trade calls "titles". The author of this tangled web had the advice of professionalists accustomed to wielding words without ambiguity. However, he was kept or kept himself in anonymous seclusion from the organizations of writers that were campaigning for PLR. The government warned us that if we tried to have the conception or the wording of the Bill improved we should risk losing the measure itself.

Now the draftsman of the document has burst out of anonymity on to your letters page of September 17. It would be natural if bad conscience had impelled him to public confession. Instead (and this is perhaps a symptom of habitual muddle on his part), he makes a snide and ignorant attack on his victims.

The Act entered the statute book dragging its tail behind it. Against the wishes of the writers, who would have preferred to finish the matter in one go and had precise proposals ready for doing so, the Act left the government with the duty of framing secondary legislation in the form of a "scheme" laying down the administrative rules of PLR. From 1979 to 1982, the civil servants and the authors whom the Act bound them to consult had to struggle to frame a scheme that would work and that yet should abide by the rickety and self-contradictory outline imposed by the Act Mr Carter drafted.

Some of the provisions he drafted are, evidently, obscure even to him. He speaks of expecting devices to be applied after the passing of the Act to prevent the PLR pool from being scooped by "the writers". Yet according to Dame Agatha Christie, "Vat accord" is the best interpretation the civil servants and their lawyers can work out of Mr Carter's words, it is in reality his Act that makes any author ineligible for PLR if he died without being registered.

There is no truth in the impression Mr Carter gives that the question of the entitlement of compilers of dictionaries and textbooks, illustrators, joint authors and editors, writers of short stories published together, etc, etc is now being "left to the judgment of the unfortunate Registrar". The answer in each of these cases, including many others, is meticulously spelled out in the scheme, which received final parliamentary approval in April of this year. How careless of Mr Carter to draft an Act that required a scheme to be framed and then write you a letter on the subject without bothering to read the scheme.

Neither is it true that the public funding of PLR was a last-minute, last-ditch notion of the government's. From the outset (1972), it was an essential item in the programme of Writers Action Group, which was determined that the public library service should not be impaled.

Unlike buyers of TV licences, theatre tickets or chocolates, borrowers of books from public libraries have an unrestricted opportunity to sample the goods before selecting one. Despite this, Mr Carter is furthering his half penny of taxpayers' money even if the borrower, on getting the book home, "reads the first five pages only to find that it is rubbish". He expresses no fury that the librarian receives his publicly funded wage for checking out a book which the borrower is destined to return having chosen it. Does not seem to have struck him that borrowers are free agents and that authors and librarians alike are paid for the service the borrower chooses to take from the library.

To pay the author in such a case relieves him, Carter says, "from what

in a just world would be the penalty of writing bad books". Carter's supposedly just world is, presumably, a world without PLR payments - in other words, the world we have now and will continue to have until February 1984. In that world, no penalty in fact falls on an author whose book is returned to the library the day after it is borrowed that does not fall equally on an author whose book is not returned for three weeks. In this respect, Carter's words appear to mean something but don't.

They do, however, propound a remarkable aesthetic. Their inescapable meaning is that, should a borrower take *King Lear* "home", and after five pages, find "that it is rubbish", Carter holds Shakespeare guilty of "writing bad books" and thinks he should suffer some "penalty". (What, incidentally, if one borrower thinks *King Lear* rubbish but another thinks it wonderful?)

A little further on, Carter has a fresh complaint. Now the PLR fund is being used up by popular writers "leaving nothing, or only a few pence a year, for writers of quality with small public appeal". Who, however, are these writers of quality who do not appeal to many borrowers? Carter has just told us that a writer who doesn't appeal to a borrower writes "bad books" and should be penalized. Recognizably, this is the intellect that drafted the muddled Act.

Mr Carter sneers at writers (apparently in ignorance that illustrators, too, are eligible for PLR), sneers doubly at writers of fiction and sneers triply at writers of fiction who are women. His highest contempt, however, is for Parliament. New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Denmark and West Germany all have PLR systems, of various legislative and administrative natures. In Britain, however, where the problem is the most acute, because Britain has by far the largest library network in the western world, Parliament is, according to Carter, "impotent". Its attempt to keep our written culture alive won't, he alleges, work in practice and is "bogus" in concept. Other democracies are flexible enough, where they perceive a problem, to try to solve it. In Britain, none of the previously existing statutory concepts precisely fitted the new problem created by the mass-scale, publicly funded lending of books. So, according to Carter, Parliament should have done nothing and should just have let the writing of books expire. Even people who refuse to despair of parliamentary democracy may reasonably be worried by parliamentary draftsman.

BRIGID BROPHY,
Flat 3, 185 Old Brompton Road,
London SW5.

Sir, - May I comment on the letter by Godfrey Carter on PLR (September 17)? Perhaps first though I ought to declare an interest: as an academic I write books (although I do not expect to benefit from PLR) and I am married to someone who is what Godfrey Carter calls, genteelly but apparently pejoratively, a "lady novelist".

I do not wish to comment on the contents of Godfrey Carter's letter. These seem to me to be risible, but I'm sure you'll have plenty of responses to his arguments from those more capable than I of answering them. I wish rather to comment on its source. Mr Carter is a (one-time?) member of the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, a civil service body charged with the purely technical task of drafting legislation. Part of his argument is that the PLR legislation is unworkable in practice. If the legislation is so faulty, this must be either because the ministerial instructions to the parliamentary counsel were inadequate or because the draftsman were themselves at fault in their work. Godfrey Carter (who, I take it, is retired) blames his ministerial masters, but there have been sufficient complaints in recent years about inadequate drafting of legislation to make the second a possible cause. At any rate, it becomes someone apparently responsible for the drafting of a piece of legislation

to complain about its workability.

Of course the main burden of Godfrey Carter's letter is a complaint about the policy intent behind the legislation. Here it needs to be said that, whatever the impression given, the mere fact that Mr Carter was involved in the drafting of PLR legislation does not give him any particular competence to assess it in policy terms. These are skills required by many civil servants, but not from those in the Office of which Mr Carter was a member.

JACK LIVERY,
Duck End, Great Rollright, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire.

Nabokov's 'Eugene Onegin'

Sir, - It is not I who have misunderstood Charles Johnston (Letters, September 17), but he who persists in unjustly accusing Vladimir Nabokov.

What, exactly, is "fantastic" or quirky about my father's use of words such as "precognizing", "devoiment", "dulcitude", "juventude", and "dolent"? Why does Sir Charles consider them a departure from Nabokov's credo of literalism? As a translator, does he not know that a plainer English word may not necessarily be "technically appropriate" (Vladimir Nabokov, "Reply to my Critics"), or best render the "reverberating" (ibid), "evocative" (ibid), or simply slightly archaic shading of the Pushkin usage? I strongly recommend that Sir Charles peruse "Reply to my Critics" in Nabokov's *Strong Opinions*, where such matters are explained in detail.

As for "the odd case of the 'shotman'" (3 XL, not 3 XI), Sir Charles has obviously trundled his heaviest artillery into an obscure Cornish mine in search of an easy laugh. If we are going to consult dictionaries, let us do it right. Both the venerable thirteen-volume *OED* and various other, lighter lexica, before they get to mining matters (the Llanbradach Colliery would have been another good one), first of all define "shotman" as "a shooter". And a "shooter" (first definition, *OED*) is "one who shoots with a bow or with firearms; in early use, an archer; now chiefly applied to a sportsman who shoots game"; or (first definition, Webster's *New International Dictionary*, 2nd edition, Father's copy) "one who shoots, as an archer, a gunner, a sharpshooter, or a hunter; esp., a sportsman".

I assume Nabokov chose "shotman" because it combines a delicate reverberation, in a sense akin to Russian, an echo of "sportsman", and the delicate connotation of another era. In the muck of his mine, Sir Charles has stumbled on a perfect example of Nabokovian literary: a word was needed and found that was at once technically accurate, poetically evocative, and suggestive of the proper nuance in Pushkin's *strelak*.

May I also draw your readers' attention to two misprints in the final paragraph of my earlier letter (September 3): in the quotation from my father's translation, the word "harnesses" should appear as "harnessed" and in that from Sir Charles Johnston's version "coaches" should read "coach".

DMITRI NABOKOV,
Montreux-Palace Hotel, 1820
Montreux, Switzerland.

Cochin

Sir, - Even Eric Korn (Reminders, September 10) should not be allowed to place Cochin in Andhra Pradesh; it belongs in Kerala, where Malayalam is spoken (Andhra Pradesh boasts of Telugu). "Mullagatany" probably originated from the East India Company's Sepoy base in Madras, where the language is Tamil (*Mollagga* = chillies or pepper; *thany* = water).

PRABHU S. GUPTARA,
106A Weydon Hill Road,
Farnham, Surrey.

George Grosz

Sir, - In your review (September 10) of George Grosz's autobiography, *A Small Yes and a Big No*, in a translation by A. J. Pommeroy and your reviewer S. S. Prawer says that this autobiography appeared in German in 1955 and "is now made, as the publishers claim, 'fully available in English for the first time'".

It is a pity that the publishers' claim was not examined, for it appears that an American translation published in 1946 under the title *A Little Yes and a Big No* pre-dated the publication of the original German by nine years.

The American version is copyrighted by Grosz himself and the preface is signed by Grosz from New York City and dated September 1946. The translator was Lola Sachs Dorin and the publisher the Dial Press, New York. It would seem that Grosz must himself have read and approved this translation. In these circumstances a close comparison of the two translations, including all illustrative matter, could have been most valuable, particularly to a reader who holds, as I do, the original American version. This version appears to contain more material than that under review, for it totals 343 pages, but on the other hand no chapter has a title remotely resembling "A glimpse of the thirteenth room".

HOPE LOVELL,
37 Fore Street, Tregony, Truro, Cornwall.

Mother Courage

Sir, - David Edgar's assertion (Viewpoint, September 10) that "Brecht deliberately makes his Mother Courage such an attractive and muscular character, so that an audience can share his strong emotional investment" runs counter to the facts. Brecht was dismayed by the sympathetic response of the audience and critics to his protagonist when *Mother Courage* was first produced at the Zürich Schauspielhaus in 1941. Press cuttings revealed to him that she had been taken as the nobly suffering heroine of a "Nobletragedy". To quote John Willett's translation from Brecht's later *Modellbuch*, "Deep-seated habits lead theatre audiences to pick on the characters' more emotional utterances and forget all the rest."

In his own 1949 staging, he amended his script to emphasize Mother Courage's narrowness of outlook, her pursuit of commercial interest to the detriment of her family, in order to make her less attractive to the audience. In particular, he refused to accept Friedrich Wolf's suggestion that the play should end with Mother Courage's curse "The war be damned!" because he wanted her to continue in her stubborn blindness, unimpaired by suffering. That Mother Courage still manages to attract the spectators is a credit more to the richness of the character than to Brecht's ideological intent.

LAURENCE SENELICK,
Department of Drama, Tufts University,
Medford, Massachusetts
02155.

Palindromes

Sir, - The study of palindromes is now sufficiently advanced to require some technical vocabulary. I propose the following: First, the obvious distinction between palindromic words and sentences. Then the question of the longest palindromic can be raised. The longest single-word example in English (?) must surely be Eric Korn's *repalayalamer*. The nearest rivals I know are only seven-letter words: *deified*, *reviver*, *rotator*. (The last is the example given in the *COD*, and is the subject of an excellent concrete poem by Alun Riddell.) Among palindromic sentences (by which I mean anything more than one word, whether *gug dung or Able was I ere I saw Elba*) we should

David Gascoyne

JULIEN GREEN

La Terre est si belle... 1976-1978
320pp. Paris: Seuil.
2 02 106201

This is the eleventh volume in date of Julien Green's Journal, and its title is intended to suggest its predominant theme, which is that of travel and places. The countries visited by Green during the years recorded here include Britain, Greece, Turkey, Iran, Austria and Belgium. What seems astonishing in the passages detailing his impressions is the pristine spontaneity of the appreciation he accords to everything he encounters, whether anew, as when revisiting England, or for the first time, as was the case in Greece and Turkey. In his late seventies Green was able to perceive and relish with the delight of a young poet the beauties of parts of the world that many a thoughtful, sensitive man of that age might find irredeemably stereotyped by the eyes and utterances of innumerable previous sightseers.

For a reader familiar with the voluminous Journal of André Gide, often regarded as the classic example of a twentieth-century French man-of-letters' contribution to the genre (though some might consider Paul Léautaud's even vaster chronicle to have an equally valid claim), it is difficult to avoid the parallel that can be drawn between the personal notations of Green and those of Gide. It is consequently gratifying to find, on the fifth page of Green's latest volume, the following comment, occasioned by a brief glance through the recently published correspondence between Gide and Henri Ghéon: "Ce monde-là ne m'a jamais attiré, je vous dirai tout ce qui gravitait autour de Gide. Lui-même, si passionné, attirait et propageait autour de lui des ondes d'ennui." This can hardly come as a surprise to anyone who has struggled through countless pages by Gide monotonously registering tea with Martin du Gard, practising Chopin and arid exchanges with, say, Jean Schlumberger. It is, however, doubly interesting in this connection later to come across, in an entry dated January 1978, Green's account of an afternoon's conversation with a friend during which the latter talked to him at length, "et d'une façon que je n'habituais pas à appeler sensationnelle," about Gide's Journal, affirming that, despite official declarations to the contrary, large parts of it remain unpublished and that these abound with indiscretions; but, comments Green, "de quel Journal cela n'est-il pas vrai?" Indiscretions, *obéisses* or otherwise, can hardly be said to abound in any of Green's Journals. In this one, nevertheless, there is a significant example, that combination of frankness and reserve which may be thought most typical of him when writing of subjects usually qualified as "intimate".

Assombrir toute la journée par une trop longue conversation sur la sexualité des deux sexes et autres. Je ne supporte plus qu'on m'en parle parce que j'en ai trop souffert. C'est un lourd et sombre sujet. Je me rends compte aujourd'hui que, pour me dégager de toutes ces choses, il faut une sorte de miracle intérieur dont, je n'ai pu, que constater les effets sans jamais en saisir le détail.

The first entry of *La Terre est si belle*, headed May 21, 1976—London, tells of listening that evening, in a garden near Carlyle's house, to the ravishing, distinctive song of a thrush that could be seen perched on the end of a black branch. The next day, Green refers to the "small, rose-brick, house" in Winchester, to which Jane Austen retired to die, the stone slab above her remains in the Cathedral and the stained-glass window commemorating her, which causes him to remark: "Avec quel amour l'Angleterre prend soin de ses écrivains, une fois morts!" Before returning to Paris early in June, he has seen and described Salisbury Cathedral, and Stonehenge, with admiration and fidelity.

Early in October of the same year, he and his companion arrived in Athens, after a journey defined by him as "le vieux rêve que je porte en moi".

depuis ma prime jeunesse." The day after his disembarkation in Greece, he made the traditional clamber up to the Acropolis with the friend always referred to as Eric, reflecting afterwards: "Pendant toute ma jeunesse, je pensais à la Grèce comme à une patrie et un peu de tout cela m'est revenu en voyant ces colonnes qui demeurent pour moi les plus belles du monde." Two days later, while visiting Sounion and there again marvelling at the Hellenic ruins, Green made a discovery:

Sur une des colonnes, ce malappris de Byron, comme tout le monde, voyous et touristes, a gravé son nom, car son aristocratie souffrait d'intermittences. Les signatures de son temps ne sont pas rares dans ce marbre profond, mais la signature du poète est très appliquée et d'une profondeur que les autres; on s'est donné beaucoup de mal pour être sûr que le temps n'efface pas le nom illustre. C'est la gloire, si l'on veut, et elle vaut ce que vaut la gloire: à peu près quatre sous.

There are not a few eminent writers from whose pens the conclusion of this paragraph might arouse a suspicion of perfunctory rhetoric, but such is Green's unvarying sincerity that such reserve would in this case be ill-judged. It is exactly such sincerity that before long leads him to admit to a degree of disillusionment with the dream of Classic harmony and perfection he had once cherished so ardently: "Qu'est-ce que j'attendais? Je ne sais pas, mais toutes ces ruines, si belles soient-elles, m'apparaissent comme les débris d'un monde magnifique vision française. Le charme est rompu." A few days later, having been to Epidaurus to experience the incomparable acoustics of its amphitheatre, in which a Greek actress, unemphatically reciting a monologue from the *Antigone*, caused Green to hear the word *thanatos* traversing the consecrated space like, he says, a black bird, he reached Mycenae, where he comes to the conclusion that "Des deux Grèces, c'est la violente que je préfère."

It would, however, be an error to infer from Green's preference for the dark side of Greek antiquity that he is in general predisposed most to appreciate in the world of appearances those aspects which might appear to correspond to the presently sombre world of the imagination depicted in many of his best-known novels. From Greece, he travelled with his companion directly to Turkey, there to explore certain of the superimposed sites of Byzantium and Islam, starting with Istanbul. Green immediately fell under the spell of a type of culture and architecture wholly other than that of the country he had just left behind. Though fascinated by a certain grim vision revealed to him by Greece, he confesses that he felt unhesitatingly in love with Constantinople, and though aware that in 1976 it was, as it remains, impossible to rid oneself of an intuitive apprehension of the increasingly rapid decline of the world we are used to, he succumbed with pleasure to the outward peace and undisturbed beauty of the neighbourhood of the Bosphorus.

In November 1977, having just returned from a visit to Iran, and referring to his sister Anne, to whom he was particularly devoted and who has now sadly predeceased him, he writes that, while attempting to tell her something about the "mosques of sudden trop attentif qu'elle pense à autre chose. Elle a comme moi horreur de fortifier du voyage, surtout lorsqu'il s'agit de la vie." Fortunately, his first never seems to have inspired in him a similar reticence. The twenty pages devoted to recording a tour of Wales and the North of England in May 1977 are uninterruptedly absorbing. It is diverting to learn, for instance, that Green, on arriving at Cardiff, found the sandwiches served him in the entrance hall of his hotel there "the best I had ever eaten." His Welsh tour, indeed, appears to have enchanted him on to Chester where, he records, in the no glasse un *feuille*, une feuille sur la chaise; qui, je ne sursais pas. Elle est, moi pour moi, de prescriptive l'ouie.

entière catholique, absolue comprise: "an intriguing sidelight on the workings of occultism." Liverpool is designated "une ville d'un laideur effrayant, mais la new Lady Lever Art Gallery at Port Sunlight, which struck him as "a sort of paradise", the chronicler found much to admire among the numerous Pre-Raphaelite works that are housed there. Having enjoyed York and Durham, on May 15 Green writes: "Ce matin à Haworth. Il faut être du pays pour prononcer ce nom convenablement. En aboyant un peu on y parvient. C'est chez les Brontë que nous allons, visite fort importante pour moi qui leur dois beaucoup." Towards the end of this entry occurs a passage that well illustrates the affinity Green obviously feels with the Brontës. Behind their Rectory, he explains, stretch "les moors", les vastes landes ondulées qui sont le royaume du vent, coupées de vallons où le silence se réfugie comme un voleur. Ces hauteurs, appelées "wuthering" pour le désespoir des traducteurs, l'énorme voix tantôt sourde, long mugissement sinistre, tantôt éperdue, menaçante, les traverse comme une plainte venue d'un autre monde.

La Terre est si belle... is much concerned with celebrating aspects of the objective world that still inspire both aesthetic and spiritual delight, and might well lead one to conclude that for Green, in spite of everything, the planet we inhabit remains a good place on which to spend our lives. An entry dated February 9, 1977, however, makes one of the first of

Bilingual bridges

Patrick Pollard

JEAN LAMBERT and RICHARD TIEDSCH (Editors)

Correspondance André Gide-Dorothy Bussy: Tome 3, Janvier 1937-Janvier 1951

676pp. Paris: Gallimard.
2 07 020819

Roger Martin du Gard, a close friend of Gide's, thought Dorothy Bussy was deluding herself when she believed that in other circumstances her love could have changed Gide's life. Those circumstances would have had to be very different indeed, for although Gide entertained a profound friendship for her, he felt nothing else. Volume Three of this correspondence teaches us at least that her delusion was not entirely blind. If the editors are correct in thinking that a single "I love you" reveals Gide's ultimate response to her passion, we can still wonder how clear was his understanding of English nuances. Indeed, even if he understood these words, how sincere was he in his use of them? Nothing seems to have followed this one gesture, and if Dorothy Bussy had been a less noble person their friendship could easily have been clouded by the problems which arose from Gide allocating certain translation rights to other people. For *Thérèse* he said, by way of excuse, that he needed a more "masculine" voice than hers. With only a hint of acerbity she replied that she had always suspected a young man would have suited him best in the past, too.

However, this refusal did not prevent a further fruitful collaboration. They had originally met in Cambridge in 1918, and their first mutual love had been Mariwre. Despite Gide's continued interest in the Elizabethan theatre, she had contributed little to his translation of *Antony and Cleopatra*, updated in 1938 from an abridged ballet version of 1917, nor did he ask for her help when he tried to translate *Arden of Feversham* in 1932, and again in 1950. Now, at the beginning of the war, he sought her advice and help to complete his translation of *Hamlet*. With his disarmingly honest he admitted that he had read no further than the first act when earlier translating that portion of the play. However, he now tackled the problems armed with several commentaries, other translations and a

many allusions to the writing, proof-correction and publication of the latest of his novels: "Beaucoup travaillé à mon roman (*Le Mauvais Lien*). La petite Louise est une mystique égarée suivant May, in Wales, he interrupts his chronicle of pleasant peregrinations to note that, because it is impossible for him to remain alone in a room without being impelled to attack paper with pen, he is continuing to work on this novel; and recalling what he had written fifty pages earlier, he comments: "Cela m'assombrit parce que la vérité du roman est aussi intense que la vérité d'un cauchemar, et celui qui fait le cauchemar y croit. Me voilà loin du Pays de Galles, ce pays dont le nom souffle le vent des légendes." Before the middle of July, he has finished correcting the proofs of *Le Mauvais Lien*; and on September 24, he records in the Journal: "Mon roman a paru. Il est là, sur ma table, avec cette couverture qui reproduit une peinture de Munch. *Puberté*. Parait-elle scandaleuse? Qu'appelle-t-on scandaleux de nos jours et comment s'y prend-on pour scandaliser?"

Green's use of the word *mauvais* appears to be subtly personal; he clearly intends it to convey something rather different, from the conventionally pejorative sense generally attached to it. In qualifying the air of Manchester as *mauvais*, for example, he is implicitly suggesting something more sinister than what we mean by "bad" in common parlance, a sense that cannot be distinguished from the *air mauvais* that repels and fascinates him at Mycenae. The *mauvais lieu* in

reasonable command of English for which Dorothy Bussy was largely responsible.

Gide's original intention was to produce an abridged acting version, but he was convinced by her argument that he should translate the entire play. In fact there is a large amount of close paraphrase, while only parts of the "Mousetrap" are sacrificed to the demands of good taste. In her remarks, Dorothy Bussy reveals discrimination and good sense. It is therefore all the more to be regretted that because of lack of space and the fear of overloading the volume, the editors have not printed the lists of Gide's questions and Bussy's answers on *Hamlet* which exist in manuscript. We get a few suggestions in the body of the letters, and these whet the appetite. For instance, in 1942, while he was in North Africa, Gide received the following notes, reproduced in the *Correspondance*: he has obtained the correct tone for Osric (the translation seems too off-hand, too colloquial?) "Were she ten times our mother": here he mistakes the meaning, perhaps through his own sense of filial piety—a nice irony; the character of Polonius is exactly rendered in Gide's French, "almost more amusing than in the original"; "To quit him with this arm" provokes first an explanation of "quit" then another problem: does "arm" mean a weapon, or a part of the body? Gide prefers the former, other translators the latter, and Dorothy Bussy sees a third possibility, metaphorical weapons in the form of deceit. Gide's own ingenuity is also occasionally in evidence, as, for example, in Act III iv: "Thus bad begins and worse remains behind." He thinks this is the equivalent of "I must understand that Hamlet has sinned against his mother, only in order to prevent a worse misfortune." Dorothy Bussy corrects the mistake.

Gide constantly questions the work of previous translators. According to him: they had, for example, all misunderstood the Ghost in Act I: "So lust... Will set itself in a celestial nourishment, he lust first of all could clearly see here the expression of a union of good and evil. Had he not previously translated Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and recognized a familiar image deployed there, in certain of the *Sonnets*, and in the present passage? However, his is the recompense of being thought one of the most sensitive French translators of

Green's novel is specifically a house description, which at the same time typifies, as noted by the reviewer, still writing the book, the actual destruction of modern man, *un enfer*, the novel tells is that of the incineration of incorruptible essence, the adolescent Louise, who might well be seen as a spiritualist of Little Eyolf. The fact that Green simultaneously engaged in treating a chilling theme and experiencing the world about him with wholehearted delight may at first seem paradoxical. The apparent contradiction becomes more easily acceptable if we understand the term "world" as "given" and "projected". The world presented through the eyes of the writer in this Journal is "so beautiful" that he desires to embrace as much as possible with avidity; yet he knows clear that he is nevertheless conscious of its implacable hostility to what he most values in the human essence. As to the question regarding the nature of the power that ultimately rules "the world", this is unequivocally answered by the entry with which the Journal concludes. It tells how, on August 2, 1978, Green received a visit from a Jewish friend who had previously discussed his spiritual tribulations with him. This time he declared to his confidant: "I suffer a suffer because others suffer." Yet he avowed that in the Cathedral of Spezia he had realized that Christ was God. "Dieu Enfant, dit-il. L'Enfant tient dans sa main le globe, dit-il. — Oui, c'est ainsi que je l'ai vu."

Shakespeare, and rightly so. Thanks largely to Dorothy Bussy, the French public can read a tolerably faithful version of *Hamlet*; thanks to Gide, the language can be read with pleasure.

Shakespeare's name provides almost a leitmotif in the friendship recorded in this volume, from Dorothy Bussy's "Good night sweet prince", to her rather melancholy "If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy." On many other authors, too, judgments abound from both sides. Dorothy Bussy found Lawrence antithetical. Gide thought *A Passage to India* a "remarkable book", though he did not much care for it. Both correspondents enjoyed Montaigne. When Raymond Mortimer introduced Gide to that most "Gidean" of Scottish books, Hog's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Gide wrote of his intention to promote the work, and his enthusiasm for the union of putrefaction and diabolic elements is evident in the preface he composed for the Cresset Press edition.

As expected, Gide's 1947 visit to Oxford is chronicled. Dorothy Bussy helped him with the protocol when reacting to the invitation, which came originally not from the University but from Somerville College. Gide had some further misgivings of his own, but thought it was decidedly awkward that he should be being honoured at only a month's distance from Mauriac. He was not allowed to change his mind, however, and postpone the ceremony. In the event, although he was not very satisfied with his own speech, he was gratified by the doctorate. (It is otherwise excellently printed book in the Public Orator is disgraced by mistakes in the Greek for *L'Immoralité*.)

This correspondence has now been published in almost its complete state. Only a very few letters have been withheld or summarized for reasons of discretion, or, regrettably, on suspects, through fear of boring the reader. We can assess the undoubted importance of Dorothy Bussy's play, as Gide's principal translator. It was she who, together with Gide's other friends and acquaintances—Gosse, Bennett, to name only two—built bridges, which enabled Gide to extend his own range of interests outside the confined French world of classical literature and formal structure. These letters are a monument to a sad but devoted love, and to a marriage of true minds.

Selective affinities

Hugh Lloyd-Jones

MICHAEL EWANS

Wagner and Aeschylus: The Ring and the Oresteia
271pp. Faber, £12.50.
0 571 11808 9

So far from trying to conceal the use he made of Aeschylean drama, Wagner made out its influence upon his work as greater than it really was; and in Germany the fact has been common knowledge since early in the present century. If the English public remained in ignorance of it until lately, that is because our leading interpreters of Wagner, notably George Bernard Shaw and Ernest Newman, were unfamiliar with classical Greek literature.

The last important German discussion of the question was by Wolfgang Schadeewaldt in a series of articles that first appeared on Bayreuth programmes during the early 1960s and were later reprinted in the second volume of his collection of essays called *Hellas und Hesperien* (2nd edn, 1970). Both Schadeewaldt and I, in an essay on "Wagner and the Greeks" that appeared first in the *TLS* of January 9, 1976, and later in my book of essays *Blood for the Ghosts* (1982), have argued that the plot of the *Ring* owed a good deal to that of the *Prometheus Bound*. Michael Ewans, who in a four-page appendix to his book asserts that "there is no affinity whatever between the subject-matter and the structure of the *Ring* and those of what we can guess to be those of the *Prometheus*", states that, with two not very notable exceptions, all who have written about Wagner and the Greeks have claimed that the Aeschylean drama that most influenced Wagner is the *Prometheus*. He himself devotes most of his space to an attempt to prove that the plot of the

Ring is closely dependent upon that of the *Oresteia*.

Indeed Schadeewaldt and I both argued that the plot of the *Prometheus* had a great influence on that of the *Ring*. Like *Prometheus*, Brünnhilde is the offspring of the earth-goddess who is gifted with prophetic powers; like him she defies the rule of the gods and at his order is secured by the firegod for an indefinite period, finally to be rescued by a mighty hero descended from the ruler of the gods himself through a mortal heroine whom she has succoured in the hour of her affliction. In both works there is a danger that the ruler of the gods may lose his power; in the *Prometheus* the danger is averted, but in the *Ring* the disaster is accomplished. It is by means of the figure of Brünnhilde that Wagner linked the figure of Siegfried with the fate of Wotan. He also introduced the innovation of making Wotan propagate the Volungs so that the ring may be recovered. All this is set out in greater detail in *Blood for the Ghosts*, pp 131-5.

In spite of our insistence on the extent of Wagner's use of the *Prometheus* in the making of the plot of his tetralogy, Schadeewaldt and I both observed that in a general way the dramatic technique of the only Aeschylean tetralogy whose traces have survived, the *Oresteia*, has a considerable influence on Wagner. But Mr Ewans will have it that the *Oresteia* is far more important than the *Prometheus* for the plot of the *Ring*. He seems to think, perhaps because he strongly believes in the "profound affinity" of Wagner with the real Aeschylus, that the tendency of scholars of our own time to deny the authenticity of the *Prometheus* somehow diminishes its importance in connection with Wagner. In fact Ewans grossly exaggerates the strength of the case against the play's Aeschylean authorship; and as for Wagner, he never doubted it, any more

than Byron, Shelley or Marx doubted it. Sir E. Evans simply brushes aside the arguments for Wagner's use of the *Oresteia* in the making of the plot of the *Ring*. He can easily persuade himself that none of the resemblances noted by his predecessors is "as close or as convincing as they appear at first sight". But the alleged resemblances between the plot of the *Ring* and that of the *Oresteia* which he has devoted most of his space to trying to establish are convincing neither at first sight nor at any sight at all.

Das Rheingold, he tells us, corresponds to the first choral ode of the *Agamemnon*; Alberich resembles Agamemnon in having sacrificed love for the sake of power. Wotan's position in *Die Walküre* "is parallel to that of Clytemnestra in the *Agamemnon*"; this is because "both go beyond accepted limits", and "these resemblances are so central that they quite outweigh the obvious differences between Aeschylus' calculating murderer and Wagner's tormented god". "The influence of the Cassandra scene", Ewans tells us, "pervades every part of *Die Walküre* Act 2 except the first scene, and 'the qualities which Aeschylus embodied in his chorus and in Cassandra are widely distributed among the characters of *Die Walküre*', only 'it is of course Siegfried whose development in Act 2 is most indebted to Aeschylus' Cassandra" (no word of Io in the *Prometheus*). The contrast between Alberich in *Das Rheingold* and Wotan in *Die Walküre* is claimed to show the existence of "a deep parallel with Aeschylus' story-pattern"; also the Wagnerian Siegfried and the Aeschylean Orestes are "precisely parallel", and the Wanderer's attempt to bar Siegfried's way to Brünnhilde somehow parallels Clytemnestra's last appeal for mercy to her son. The Norms of *Götterdämmerung* correspond to the Delphian prophetess who speaks the prologue of the *Eumenides* (not

that she does any prophesying). Both these works, which the ordinary human being must find singularly unlike each other, "depict a struggle between darkness and light", and "like Aeschylus, Wagner gradually withdraws the simple 'black and white' image as the work proceeds"; this is shown by the way in which the audience of *Götterdämmerung* "loses some of its hostility to Hagen", a feature which Ewans, who seems to have been the first to have observed it, thinks may have been suggested by the increasingly sympathetic treatment of the Erinyes in the second half of the *Eumenides*. Evans finds Siegfried's flirtatious conversation with the Rhine-Daughters to be "very close in spirit" to the scene of the *Seven Against Thebes* in which Eteocles forces the Theban women to abstain from lamentation; anyone who believes that will believe anything. But something still order is to come: *Parzifal* "transmutes the symbols, the images, and even the characters of the *Ring* very much as if it were the satyr-play to the trilogy".

About the features of Wagnerian technique that have been thought to reflect Aeschylean influence, Mr Ewans is not informative. His belief in an intimate connection between the plot of the *Ring* and that of the *Oresteia* encourages him to believe in the "profound affinity" between the two authors. That is made easier for him by his indifference to more modern influences upon Wagner's work, and still more by the complete humourlessness, almost rivalling Wagner's own, which pervades every page of his silly and pretentious book. George Steiner has not unjustly remarked that on the whole Wagner has less in common with Aeschylus and Sophocles than he has with Alexandre Dumas fils and Victorien Sardou; he is an artist in whose work greatness is strangely mixed with shoddiness.

Under the spell of Klingsor

Lucy Beckett

RAYMOND FURNESS

Wagner and Literature
159pp. Manchester University Press.
£14.50.
0 790 0444 1

STODDARD MARTIN

Wagner to "The Waste Land": A Study of the Relationship of Wagner to English Literature
277pp. Macmillan, £20.
0 333 28998 6

One might suppose that a hundred years after his death the lines of battle, at least in the discussion of Wagner and his work would be clear. The fact that this is not so, and that in many ways the critical confusion surrounding him seems to become only denser and noisier year by year, is attributable both to the scale of his achievement and to the force of his personality. Most of the muddles began in his lifetime: many were initiated by himself. The two books under review show how easy it is for judgment to falter if the origins of confusion are not appreciated.

Both books set out to trace Wagner's influence on literature. Raymond Furness's essay is shorter but more extended in scope than Stoddard Martin's, which confines itself to English and Irish writers. Dr Furness arranges his very various material under four broad chapter headings: "Symbolism and modernism", "Wagner and decadence", "Wagner and myth", and "Parody and pastiche". The wisdom of choosing this method begins to seem questionable when one looks in vain for a strong connecting argument distinguishing each chapter from the others; many of his examples could appear in more than one chapter, and several do, with consequences that are less than illuminating. More damagingly, the difference between parody and influence is frequently blurred. The bathing scene in *A Room with a View* has a comic reference

which puts it, rightly, under "pastiche". ("Three gentlemen rotated in the pool breast high, after the fashion of the nymphs in *Götterdämmerung*"); this scene can hardly also be a serious instance of "those mythical and symbolic images present in European literature and thought which are attributable to Wagner's influence". There is a plethora of reference but no influence in Beardsley's embarrassing *Under the Hill*. This is dealt with as "Decadence" but has to be mentioned again as "Parody", thus making at least one too many appearances in the book. Some of Furness's decisions about the assignment of texts to chapters are worse than arbitrary. Anthony Burgess's *The Worm and the Ring* ("Albert Rich and his rain reflection sloshed through the puddles after the three giggling four-form girls") is not counted as parody, but opens the chapter "Wagner and myth" as proof of "the subliminal indoctrination of the mythological and symbolic content of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*". Again, the novel's Wagnerian connection is one of highly conscious reference rather than of subliminal influence.

But Furness attempts much deeper water than Foster's or Burgess's puddles. The whole topic of Wagner's influence on the French Symbolists and here real influence is meant—has throughout its history been beset by misunderstanding: Baudelaire's of Wagner's theories, Mallarmé's of Wagner's works, and the compounded misunderstandings of the modernist literary of the 1930s who regarded the greatest creative figure of their day with awe and unwarranted veneration. This is a critical minefield of whose dangers Furness scarcely seems aware. The promotion of music to supremacy over the other arts on account of its absolute and abstract qualities was indeed, as he says, the idea that inspired the efforts of neofet poets, novelists and playwrights to emulate what they thought Wagner had achieved. This idea, as he also says, reached its overpowering pre-eminence through Wagner's appropriation of it from Schopenhauer, what he does not say

however, is that Wagner, in characteristic fashion, took over the idea because it reassured him and strengthened his public case for himself, but wrote music which exploded it to pieces by being relative and referential as music had never been before. Wagner drastically wrenched the nature of music to make it serve his dramatic ends: he filled it with specific, translatable meanings, fractured its formal structures and reassembled the bits as an infinitely flexible language revealing character and situation.

In a word, Wagner made music literary, to the horror, incidentally, of most of his musician contemporaries who understood what he had done. Mallarmé was trying to write poetry like late Beethoven quartets; Wagner had used music as Shakespeare used English in *Macbeth* or *Othello*. Unless this chain of misunderstandings is negotiated, confusion will result, as it does in parts of this book. To take Wagner as the father of modernism because he accelerated an "all-pervasive shift towards music, symbolism and, ultimately, abstraction", is to see only the superficial reaction against Wagner. Furness does not see it thus. Wagner does not deal in "private" images, and "autonomous metaphor" but in the public material world of dramatic events and confrontations in which things are (also) what they seem: his gold is gold, his rainbow (unlike Lawrence's) a rainbow, Amfortas's wound hurts as Oedipus's blinding and Gloucester's, hurt. If Wagner's *Grail* is not a holy cup containing the blood of Christ, then *Parzifal* loses the significance that Wagner very plainly gives us in the words of the work itself. All this is as far a cry from the self-conscious ironies of Joyce and Mann as it is from the "wishy-washy" symbolism of Maeterlinck. Wagner gives us myth straight; he is, in this sense, a naïve artist. In Joyce and Eliot myth is refracted through the broken glass of twentieth-century city streets—and Wagner's work is part of what is refracted. The distinction is important.

One example of what happens if it is

not borne in mind is the familiar theory, repeated here, that the "stream of consciousness" is derived by Joyce and Virginia Woolf from Wagner via Dujardin, and that it would fail as a literary technique without the use of leitmotiv to hold it together. There is nothing wrong with this theory—Joyce and Virginia Woolf probably, and Dujardin certainly, thought they were writing like Wagner—except that the stream of consciousness technique is quite unlike what Wagner actually did. He does not tell us what is passing randomly through one character's mind moment by moment; he is a dramatist, and controls moment by moment what is passing through our minds in relation to the whole complex of characters, event and material objects before us on the stage. The leitmotiv technique, the constantly built up structure of reference and significance, is a literary method at least as old as Shakespeare: consider the cumulative effect of the imagery by which we are made to feel the final assault of the black marauder, Othello, on his white Venetian treasure, Desdemona. Dickens was using leitmotiv without fuss long before *The Ring* saw the light of day; if Conrad and Lawrence used it too it is more likely to be because they were, like Wagner, great creative writers controlling with subtlety the emotions of their audience than because they would never have thought of it without his example.

Furness occasionally lapses into real folly, as when he makes Wagner the "godfather" of the "objective correlative", of the phrase Eliot fished from Santayana, and an idea not original when Shakespeare gave it a local habitation and a name; or when a casual letter of Lawrence's is said to "link music and blood in a most characteristic manner" when all it does is chance to use both words in the same sentence. In spite of a few such moments of literary blindness and an underlying lack of clarity on some major issues, the book is attractively written, contains some entertaining and unfamiliar material, and is entertainingly illustrated.

Dr Martin approaches his more

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limited field more solemnly, and with the sensible precaution of taking his literary subjects one by one. He also sub-divides his chapters into little head-lined chunks so that there is no possible doubt in the reader's mind as to what is afoot. But Martin's literary balance in the face of the tidal wave of what he takes to be Wagner's influence is less secure than Furness's and he constantly mistakes superficial reference for real engagement, intention for achievement, and the common currency of late Romantic cliché for the stamp of Wagner's unique creative genius. Several of the earliest and shorter chapters could have been dispensed with altogether. Swinburne and Wilde in different ways made use of Wagnerian allusion as part of the apparatus of sentimental decadence but their relation to him is not much closer than that of a couple of luxury yachts to a battleship that happens to have preceded them over the same stretch of ocean. Yeats's place in the book is justified by even less. As Martin admits, Yeats was unusually resistant to the whole Wagner phenomenon. Parallels between him and Wagner are no more than parallels: lines which never meet. Again, they sailed the same sea.

Both were Romantics of the most passionate type, both lifelong

seekers after the heroic, and both aspirants to the creation of a new religion based on the oldest standards of nobility of their races. Both lived their lives in symbiotic relation to their art, and conceived of that art as the battleground for the spiritual struggles of their souls.

This, and there is much more, merely describes a lowest common denominator; the first sentence is not quite true of Wagner and the second is true of practically all artists since the French Revolution.

The chapters on Symonds and Moore are more successful (Symonds at least had a real critical grip on Wagner's work), though it would be reassuring to feel that Martin had noticed how very bad the Wagnerian novels and poems in question are. The Shaw chapter is hampered by oversimplification of the complex relationship of ideas between Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche, and of other issues also: "Shaw gave lengthy metaphysical speeches on the subject of his central idea, arias of a kind, to his Tanners and Caesars and other principle spokesmen, in a manner which certainly bears relation to Wagner's technique with Wotan." The differences between Wotan's intensely dramatic musings and the

lectures of Shaw's characters are surely far more striking than their similarities. The real meat of the book, however, is contained in the three long chapters on Joyce, Lawrence and *The Waste Land*. Of these the Joyce chapter is the best, although much of it is not new and the claimed Wagner echoes in the Celtic twilight poems of *Chamber Music* are yet more period clichés. The Lawrence chapter attributes to Wagner much of what is really Nietzschean in Lawrence, and forces the material into neat patterns which seriously distort its true nature.

"Nietzsche, Wagner and Lawrence all had a Mediterranean side which coexisted with the Germanic values with which they are more usually identified. . . . All three spent most of their lives in opposition to the religion of the South, but all three returned to the Christ-myth in their final works." It is hard to imagine a reader for whom this sentence would contain useful information. The quoted lists of the opposing characteristics of "Western liberalism" and "Heroic vitalism," and "Western tradition" and "New German paganism" tell one something about Lawrence and fascism, but, in direct contradiction to Martin's intention, show how far Wagner was from both. Most of Wagner's own ideas appear on the "Western" lists.

The book's last and longest chapter sets out to demonstrate that *The Waste Land* is "a synthesis and logical endpoint to a Wagnerian tradition, roughly the one outlined in the preceding chapters. The specific goal is to suggest how the poem might be read as a version of *Parzifal*." This thesis is untenable and Martin is out of his depth in the presentation of it. Wagner and Eliot have as little in common as it is possible for two major artists to have whose lifetimes almost overlap. The detailed comparison collapses on inspection: Kundry, for instance, is not like any, still less all, of the women in *The Waste Land*; "the third who walks always beside you" does not "bring to mind Gurnemanz" and Kundry ascending to Monsalvat with the mysterious monk-robed third who later reveals himself to be *der Erlöser* (Parzifal at this point is an unarmed knight and Gurnemanz and Kundry know perfectly well who he is); and Gurnemanz and Eliot's Tiresias have nothing of substance in common. More importantly, the whole atmosphere of *The Waste Land*, bitter, disjointed, sharply redolent of the place and time in which it was written, is in profound (and rebellious) contrast to the seamless autumnal completeness of *Parzifal*. Above all, the "Wagnerian tradition" on which the theory is built is

not a tradition at all but a quicksand allusion and period coincidence.

There are several howlers in Martin's book. Schopenhauer's name was Arthur, not Arnold; Madame Sosostiris is thus spelled; Wagner had abandoned *Jesus of Nazareth* and *The Vectors* long before his death; the costumes and scenery of the Bayreuth Garden were never brought to Covent Garden. These mistakes are insignificant; less so is Dr Martin's assumption that *Aufklärung* is the correct term for the Romantic movement in Germany.

These two books provide, as do many others, some of which are quoted here, depressing evidence that old Klingsor is still casting his spell, numbing the critical faculties of a stunned mixture of awe and distaste. The complicated question of the nature and quality of Wagner's influence on literature cannot be answered without both an exact appreciation of what Wagner himself created and a steady, clear and careful application of literary judgment to a large mass of material some of which may be more or less Wagnerian in mood or reference or method or aspiration. It is not an easy task but it is time the smoke lifted, at least from the auditorium.

FICTION

For the love of it

Valentine Cunningham

Laura Riding

Progress of Stories
380pp. Manchester: Carcanet New Press. £7.95.
0 85635 402 3

Riding? Gottschalk? (Riding) Jackson? The blur over how she is to be known nicely reflects the strident confusions that are mongered in and about her fictions. "The key to Story", asserts Laura Jackson in an explanatory note at the end of this new gathering of Riding and Jackson writings (mainly a reprint of the 1973 *Progress of Stories* with other pieces and a new preface added). "The key to Story is boundless sympathy with the immensely varied actualities of life." Story is "extraordinarily alive"; it is the next best thing to truth — when it is formed with love of it for its capability of feebly likeness to life. Sympathy, love, immense variety, actualness, feebly, likeness to life: they're admirable, amiable sentiments, traditional ones too, of just the sort — but the turgidly bound-up way they're put — that Iris Murdoch and the gang of liberally loving, anti-modernist novel-readers trailing in her wake might be tempted to rush in to endorse. But they'd be quite mistaken. For these late reflections on what story is touch Mrs Riding's and Mrs Jackson's fictions, as represented in this volume, in almost no particular whatsoever.

It is utterly characteristic that they crop up next to a wispish spurning of some unelocome company a couple of her stories, "Eve's Side of It" and "In the End", had fallen into in the pages of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*. Mrs Jackson won't stand for her stuff being absorbed "into the raucous favor of current feminist narrative". So much, then, for any boundless sympathy with the immensely varied ways in which stories, let alone life, may be read.

But then, this volume is dedicated to a pair of friends "Who know how to read this book right"; gratifyingly, soon becomes clear, rare escapes from what's called "the inveterate manner of readers of reading as they pleased and not as they were supposed to read". You have to see things, in other words, precisely Laura's way.

If you fall to, you're met not by dignified silence nor even by anything much resembling persuasive argument, but rather by incontinent amazement that anyone should miss the point or the merits of the story in question. In a discussion of "Christmas-time" in this volume's preface, we are told that "I was moved to write it as a little end-of-year Christmas gift for a few friends, and I have since made a few presentations of it. In none of the responses that I received was there any manifestation of the quality I have described as, in my experience as a writer and reader of stories, a reader and writer of stories, the constitutional and spiritual essence of story-nature." Nevertheless it is included here, "under the persuasion of its having an outstanding purity of story-motivation". After all, as Laura Riding puts it defiantly at the end of her odd homage to fairy, "A Crown for Hans Andersen", authors spend a lot of time "befriending the wrong people, which means in turn that one is neglecting the right people. For, of course, there are right people? I mean, does one not owe it to the general situation to behave as if, undoubtedly, yes? And, sure enough, right readers eventually turn up to prove her right. Even as she composes her new Preface the quality I have described as, in my experience as a writer and reader of stories, a reader and writer of stories, the constitutional and spiritual essence of story-nature" is at hand. "Just the other day I made a fresh presentation of the story to a pair of friends, and there came swiftly — the first event — a response of pleasure felt. Have times been changing? I have seen no signs of this. But two, and myself for a starter, project a line of possibility of infinite extension. Solipsism on this scale evidently needs little by way of reassurance.

Certainly it takes more than a lot of neglectful readers to pierce the thick skin of such undaunted confidence. As ever (and one thinks of the dull wastes of the big little-magazine *Epilogue* that she Riding mistress-mind in the 1930s), authorial conceit stamps all over any quibble. Laura (Riding) Jackson unrepentantly endorses Laura Riding's boasts about her stories' merits by unblushingly reprinting and augmenting them. Like her earlier self, she presumes that even her most opaque bits of critical thought and afterthought are welcome ("I cannot think that this later view of the story would be other than helpful to readers of it, it having been helpful to me in my understanding of it"). Nor has she grown any less contemptuous towards readers who, discovering her "important" material to be obscure, quite naturally attempt thereby that "their attention is not equal to the requirements".

What is required, apparently, is an attention that will rate a hit-or-miss intellectualism verging on the bogus as the credible portentiousness it wishes it were ("My story is not, you see, a simple fancy — or a simple anything"). That attention must smile on a cheap habit of flaunting paradox as if it were complex thinking. It must be ready to condone the mimicry of "The Playground", the dumbly Gothic plotting that sustains her picaresque "Three Times Round", the quest for the significance of fairy-tale that normally collapses into dismaying childishness. It must also, grant

high originality to the investment in a jazz-modern, café-cabaret mode ("The Secret") that stays stubbornly sub-Brecht, sub-Auden, as well as to the damp fizzle of her Arthurian re-reading (in "A Crown for Hans Andersen"). The most striking aspect now of the original 1935 preface is its extended but wobbly attempt to repeat the casual authority of Virginia Woolf's critical tones ("You try to think. What a nice party: but you cannot help feeling dissatisfied . . . No, it is no good unless it is all the same conversation. In a little while it will be all the same conversation. And all we can do about it, having got so far, is to be careful of accidents.")

No, Laura Riding was never a reliable commentator on her own writing's ways, and Laura (Riding) Jackson doesn't appear to have advanced much further in the paths of critical self-knowledge. These stories have "no least ulterior purpose of a telling", insists the 1982 preface, forgetful perhaps of the propagandistic purpose to which the story, "Socialist Pleasures" ("Another Socialist pleasure was winning arguments") was quite naturally put in the sad Laura Riding-Harry Kemp volume *The Left Heresy in Literature and Life* (1939). The author's loud suspicions of "feminist analysis" cannot alter these stories' repeated note of woman's plight and woman's aggressive response. Their dramatizing of the unhappiness of the repressed daughter

took out his hat and turned. "Where did you go?" said Porter.

Feminism, espoused with the same determination with which she has previously mastered ballroom dancing, does as little for her psyche as a new wardrobe or a henna rinse. Possibly, a child (which would undoubtedly have saved the marriage) might have drawn her from her self-absorption. But after it becomes clear that they will never have the child that Porter has longed for and Mrs Lamarche has, dutifully, been prepared to provide, Porter, though still polite and attentive to her physical well-being, transfers his affections at first to a collection of indoor plants, then to a young widow and her two children.

He dies suddenly at his desk, and an extended period of mourning, in which Mrs Lamarche feels that she has finally possessed him and can be seen to have done so, carries her fairly close to fulfillment. Her righteous widowhood is ruined when his executors make known to her not only that he had intended to retire to the West Indies with the young mother and her children, but also that the liaison has had the approval of Porter's wide circle of friends. Behind a painstakingly constructed barrier of spirited truisms, her confusion remains inviolate to the end. Verbal attack has always been her best method of defence; wholly misunderstood and humiliated, she is soon able to isolate herself completely.

As of this writing, my little effort opens with one of the loveliest lines in the language — "What's that?" he said. "I wandered lonely, as a cloud", she said. "You wandered?" Porter said. "Lonely as a cloud?" She waited. He went to the hall closet.

The narrative moves swiftly from vignette to vignette, and these are linked, on the whole without clumsiness, by Mrs Lamarche's inexhaustible appetite for cliché together with Porter's dry, but not unloving, rpostes. In one of her periodic stabs at self-revelation, she contemplates autobiography and tries to engage her husband's attention:

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The narrative moves swiftly from vignette to vignette, and these are linked, on the whole without clumsiness, by Mrs Lamarche's inexhaustible appetite for cliché together with Porter's dry, but not unloving, rpostes. In one of her periodic stabs at self-revelation, she contemplates autobiography and tries to engage her husband's attention:

Her antecedents are East-Coast literary. Like Olive Chancellor in *The Bostonians*, her nature is "a skiff on a stormy sea"; her inept endeavours to steer it into calm waters are at best a source of amusement or incomprehension to her husband, the worthy Porter, and to his seemingly insensitive friends; at worst she evokes embarrassment and horror. Like Edith Wharton's May Welland, she has been bred for a marriage in which she must always appear to be "loyal, gallant and unresentful". But unlike May Welland, she is anything but simple and serene. The social milieu of contemporary New York, far removed from old-fashioned Episcopalian society, requires her to work grimly at living through and for her husband.

The depiction (mainly through dialogue) of the two main characters, Porter and Mrs Porter Lamarche, and of the course of their relationship, is extremely well done. Hilda, their invaluable maid, is realized not so much through detailed description of her busy housekeeping as through her brief dispensations of Brooklyn common sense. Other, lesser characters are also defined by apparently idle observation and chat.

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The depiction (mainly through dialogue) of the two main characters, Porter and Mrs Porter

The College Ghost

For Hugh Sinclair

At 11.25, after a college beano
Designed to wish a retiring colleague well
(Who with a glass in one hand, a watch in the other
Like the pieces of Alice's mushroom, sat and then rose
To remind with smiling words why we shall miss him),

At that suspended hour of a summer night,
Having made my few farewells, collected my gown,
My black tie carelessly telling the approximate time,
The claret filling my toes, the toes my shoes
And the shoes knowing more or less the way to go,

I left the smoking-room and paced the cloisters
In the wrong direction, almost three sides where one
Would do, to find the passage to take me safely
To the only place where we regularly fall
Utterly unconscious without rebuke or danger

And came at once upon the college ghost
Lolling in a Gothic arch not far from the kitchen.
It had a gross nonchalant air, pretending
That it simply chanced to be there waiting for no one
Particularly, picking its non-existent nails.

Its face was puffy and indistinct, the eyes
Burnt holes, nose gone, the grin healthy
But upside down. It wore a college scarf
And a row of pens in its shroud like a boffin,
Slouched in its window in a May Week pose.

It watched me as I approached and it made its greeting,
Not deferent, not assertive, simply assuming
Its right to expect me to stop, as though our notes
Had crossed and whatever it was had there and then
To be settled and some confusion straightened out.

The night was dark and winy as a cellar,
The only noises the clacking of the flaps
On St Swithun's tower and the thumping of my heart.
But I wasn't surprised. I felt it was an encounter
Fated at one or another time to occur.

I fingered the keys in my pocket, the inner and outer
Circuits, comforting brass and heavy for turning
The secret doors and great gates of the college,
Fingered them as though they were amulets
To keep at a distance the presence I found before me.

Behind and through it gleamed the broad green square
Of the lawn where all that summer afternoon
In various attitudes of conversation
Undergraduates had sat with early tea
Outstepping the lingering remains of lunch

And the voice of the shapeless shape, if voice it was,
Drifted towards me softly, catching my ear
Exactly like a carefully-placed loudspeaker,
And its words were the words of all who had sat on that lawn
Through similar afternoons until such darkness fell:

"Though I am not often seen here, at least at times
When troublesome tasks last through daylight or take
You from page to page of assorted misadventures,
Nose down like a broker or a winded traveller
Fretful for the last train in a foreign city,

"Though I am discrepant and uncorroborated
As a reputation embarrassing as the memory
Of insufficient words at parting; feared
Like a summons for a forgotten misdemeanour;
Still, I do appear, and appear to you now.

"It's precisely at times like this, when you are distracted
By well-being and owl-light from shutting your senses
To what I represent and am ready to communicate
That I eagerly seize my chance to materialize
Like an image on paper in a padded tray.

"You reckon you can shortly make your escape,
Say more next time. So be it. That is your manner.
But for the moment, stay. I have something to tell you.
That has been keeping but will not keep for ever,
Like Gilgamesh stone or a Pomerol, but not so nice.

"It concerns the conspiracy to keep me partly asleep
With promise of distinct pleasures belonging to
The forms of success towards which you propelled me,
Wise like an elder framing a constitution
Before he retires and dies a powerless legend.

"You gave me much that could not shame the giver
Whatever whoops of joy and sounds of breakage
Greeted your smiles, fond as a distant uncle,
When the package was ripped open, the contents spilled,
The crucial instructions immediately lost.

"But grammar burned bishops and nations fell to the prism.
I negotiated the quantities of blood required
To put into effect the decrees of the ineffable.
I argued over heads that I knew were soon
To lose all interest in what they commanded.

"I was present when the planet first took its header
Into the bracing briny of the impermanent.
I dignified the scribbled with the spacing of nuts and mutons.
I bowed in Washington, once the place was invented.
Through me the Greeks discovered Australia.

"Theories of diet dispersed tribes, infections
Accompanied stately truths like interpreters.
I took your towers for wit, your laws for sorrow,
And made the friendships that reduced brown acres
Of imposing mahogany to the space of a handclasp.

"Even when the world in a more appealing tongue
Spoke of the price to be paid for a share of power,
It was to you I referred with a slight shrug
And perhaps a mock self-deprecatory grin
That could not decide if it cared for your approval.

"You gave it. And that was when I became a ghost,
Rising invisibly in the halls and staircases
Of my consecrated youth, while everything true
And good fell from my fingers or from windows,
Drifting like laughter in the direction of the ivy.

"Now I appear to you because at last
I have rejoined you for ever. Life has made
Its choices. My affairs are finally quite complete
And there is nothing left in the world to alter.
Whatever you teach will make no difference at all."

So saying, it boyishly scissored the stone sill
With a careless stretch of the arms and a hint of flannel
As the bells in the tower tensed to toll three quarters
And the moon behaved as it likes to do at these moments,
Nodding above the treescape like an impresario.

Which way it went I really couldn't say,
But it had gone. And so I slowly continued
My right-angled path through the heart of the college,
Less light of foot, but somewhat enlightened,
Slightly unsure of what I thought I had heard.

Darkness was all around me like a sixth
Sense, or the absolute quiet of certain music
That the hand trembles to play. And it was like
The world pressing on its pockets of resistance,
Like righteous claims of love. Or threats of war.

And indeed, I thought, the ultimate chaos will surely be
A predicate of just this irresponsible architecture
Of convinced laws and prayers that meddled for years
With the best of fateful intentions until the wind changed.
The words were in my head like an egg in a bottle.

Thoughts too late to unthink: I had the feeling
Of being betrayed by something of my choosing.
Something I had connived at, something belonging
To the projection of a long-suspected falling,
Haunted by the forces it exploits.

John Fuller

The linguistic and the psychotic

John Forrester

JACQUES LACAN
Le Séminaire, Livre III: Les Psychoses
366pp. Paris: Seuil.
2 02 99 6026 4

"Fou Lacan". With this pun ("fou" le camp), the front page of the French daily, *Libération*, announced the death in September 1981, of Jacques Lacan; there followed nine pages devoted to the event. Lacan's influence on the intellectual life of France is indisputable – as great as Sartre's, perhaps the single most important influence since the Second World War. Its index is not given by the knowing, or not so knowing, references to Lacanian concepts, or the flood of unreadable articles and books so obviously influenced by his style. The readers of *Libération* who would avidly read nine pages devoted to that uniquely unsymbolic event, the death of a man, were also those who, over the years, packed the auditoriums where Lacan spoke, and who might, by dint of circumstance and confusion, find themselves on the couches of the 5,000 or so analysts who practise the art in France (most of them, of course, in Paris).

In Britain, where we have mobilized our common sense to resist the epigones of Freud, we feel entitled to pay little attention to the passing of the French Freud, whose life and work, we now suspect, reveals in the most clear-cut fashion that the Emperor, whether an austere Austrian Jew or a surrealistically inclined French psychiatrist, has no clothes. And it is certainly no coincidence that the most intellectually sensitive attack on Lacan's theories to date, Derrida's of some ten years back, opened with a discussion of the passage in *The Interpretation of Dreams* concerned with dreams of nudity and self-exposure, where Freud commented on Hans Christian Andersen's story. Yet Derrida's point was one that runs counter to our "Anglo-Saxon" desire to dispense with such charlatans altogether; he wished to show that the moment of revelation, in which a small child indicates to the audience that the truth stands naked before them, if only they can "open their eyes" to see it, is one more version of the theory of truth as a "revelation" or disclosing, a theory to which Lacan appeared to subscribe.

Lacan's career was a demonstration of those effects of speech which he claimed psychoanalysis was uniquely placed to study. On the one hand, he was a conventional professional man, who worked at his chosen trade for fifty or so years. On the other, he willingly opened up the Pandora's box of shamanism, charlatanism, modishness and duperly. It wasn't until he was sixty-five that a collection of his writings, which had previously appeared in specialist journals, was published. And by that time he was already both famous and infamous – for his charismatic effect on his disciples, for his rehabilitation of Freudian theory, and for the inevitable schisms and dissensions that surrounded his person.

The history of the psychoanalytical movement in France is inextricably bound up with his personal destiny. Jacques Lacan was born in Paris on April 13, 1901, the son of Emile and Audry. Educated by the Jesuits, he trained as a doctor and then as a psychiatrist. His first professional communication was given in 1926 and his doctoral thesis, of 1932, was on the paranoiac psychoses in their relation to the personality. His academic mentors, if he had any, were Henri Claude and Georges de Clérambault. The former had been instrumental in allowing those French psychiatrists who first took an interest in Freud the freedom to try out the new ideas, at a time when such a "German" "pansexualism" met with a chauvinistic and morally outraged response from much of the medical profession. Clérambault was famous for his nosological innovation of mental automatism and for his linguistic expertise and encyclopedic knowledge of the history of clothes. Lacan, however, was soon independent of his mentors, and joined the group L'Évolution Psychiatrique,

which introduced Freudian ideas into France and was also open to the "functionalist" approach of the English evolutionists (Jackson, Head) as well as the phenomenological school that developed in Zürich and Germany during the 1920s, and became the psychiatric avant-garde in the 1930s (Jaspers, Minkowski, Binswanger).

The young Lacan was not just an ambitious and dedicated psychiatrist. He was from early on a member of the surrealist circles around André Breton – writing poetry, and inviting his artistic friends to the open spaces of the

communicated itself in the enthusiasm with which he encountered the psychoanalytic work that Wilfred Bion had started. To Lacan, for a brief moment, it seemed that Bion's group analysis was the way of the future. Such a surprising rapprochement was perhaps facilitated by the ideas that Lacan was producing at the time, as expressed in a 1945 paper on the logic of groups – his first publication for seven years. Certainly the practical consequences of this paper were to be momentous, since, in following out the logic of his argument concerning the nature of time and its relation to action



Jacques Lacan

Hôpital Sainte-Anne, where they decorated the walls and conducted experiments in automatic writing. But, having written two pieces for the surrealist magazine *Le Minotaure* in 1938, and a paper called "Au-delà du principe de réalité", give an idea of the density of the conceptual apparatus he had already elaborated around the concept of the mirror stage, in which are played out the essential elements of Freud's conception of narcissism and of Hegel's death-struggle between master and slave. The distinctive predilections of Lacan were already present: an extraordinary fidelity to Freud; an unrelenting suspicion of the intellectual modes of his time, including the "humanistic" innovations associated with phenomenology, to which as early as 1933, in a review of Minkowski's classic work on the pathology of time, he had opposed the more rigorous and esoteric philosophy of Heidegger; and the new Hegelianism that he had imbibed in the lectures of Alexandre Kojève from 1933-39.

At the end of the war, Lacan made a journey to London in search of a moral climate that owed its strength to a war spent in defence and struggle; rather than in capitulation and deception; his sense of "revelation" as being outside France was marked, and com-

and hesitation, Lacan began to vary the length of his own analytic sessions. It was this variation in the time bought by the patient that was to be a weapon brandished at Lacan in 1953, in the first of the international disputes he was party to, and then again in 1963, when the International Psychoanalytical Association made it a condition of affiliation for the French group to which Lacan belonged that he be expelled from their list of analysts authorized to teach and train other analysts, on the grounds that he failed to conform to the Code of Practice guaranteeing the patient that the length of the session be fixed in advance. Whatever the exact nature of his technique, either at this time or in later years, when rumours of five-minute sessions were rife, it was this issue that decided his excommunication.

By 1952 it was clear that Lacan was one of the handful of prestigious teachers and analysts in France. When the old Society split, due partly to personality clashes and partly to the authoritarian and machivellian manoeuvrings of those opposed to Lacan's group, he emerged as the intellectual force behind an increasingly distinctive conception of psychoanalysis. His famous Rome Discourse of 1953 supplied the manifesto for the new Société Française de Psychanalyse. From the late 1940s on, Lacan's forte had been recognized as the analysis of and commentary upon the writings of Freud. From 1951 on, he gave a yearly seminar on these and, with the foundation of a new

Society, this became the focus of the students' education in psychoanalytic theory. It also soon became the centre of gravity for diverse Parisian intellectuals – for Foucault, Soliers, Althusser. By 1963, when Lacan was forced to transfer the *Séminaire* from Sainte-Anne to the Ecole Normale, over 500 people were attending. By the mid-1970s, the weekly showing was well over 1,000. It was this platform that gave Lacan his fame.

Lacan's teaching, however, always moved ahead of his followers, not only to outstrip the hounds of Artemis (as he portrayed them) but also because of the dialectical instability of his thought. Lacan was a didact, not a theorist, and deliberately distorted and compressed the teachings of his *Séminaire* in his *Écrits*. In consequence, the verbatim transcriptions of the *Séminaires* themselves are far easier to comprehend. There may be even more digressions, but they can be seen to have an immediate explanation: a guest lecture from a visiting luminary of the previous evening; a particularly obtuse paper from the recent literature which provides a useful opportunity to demonstrate technical or theoretical errors and their consequences.

Even though Lacan responded immediately to such topical events, and even though his teaching constantly moved on, discarding concepts that had been around for enough time to serve their purpose (average turnover about four years), each *Séminaire* is built out of a set of themes that Lacan would return to, year in year out. Not just those with which he has become associated – the supremacy of the signifier over the signified, the iron law of the father, the decentering of the subject, the vitriolic attacks on ego-psychology and the "American way of human engineering", the delight in the play of mirrors which the mirror-phase and the Other introduce into the anxious search for a "sense of self-identity" that psychoanalysis both provokes and cures – but also a set of abiding cultural, philosophical and epistemological themes to which he anchored his thought. Most particularly, every *Séminaire* contained long ruminations on the nature of the symbol: its status as writing, its insertion into a combinatorial system, its function in mathematical formulae and, of course, a demonstration of its rhetorical resources.

Hence the basic framework of the Lacanian *Séminaire* was three-fold: firstly, the Freudian texts or texts that were the proper object of the group's discussion; secondly, the point which Lacan's theoretical elaborations had already attained, as measured by the extent to which students and disciples had engaged with his teaching; thirdly, a relatively constant set of cultural landmarks providing the bearings for Lacan's psychoanalytic theory and practice.

In *Séminaire III* on *Les Psychoses*, from 1955-56, two main themes emerge. Over the previous years, Lacan had begun to emphasize the difference between the "other" and the "Other": the first is equivalent to the image of the mirror-phase – "it is the ego, the cornerstone of the 'imaginaire', the universal fellow-man of ideals, the impersonal other of intersubjectivity (the 'one' of English; the 'on' of French – whom Freud called the *Milieu*)." Lacan's distinctive approach to the tension between solipsism and irretrievable otherness generated by the Kantian tradition and discussed, recently by Sartre, was to ground the distinction between this "other" and the Other in the phenomenology of language – thus avoiding transcendentalism. Two questions initiated this "phenomenology": "Why is it only man who plays with dice? Why is it that the planets do not speak?"

A preliminary answer to these questions invokes Pascal: on the one hand, his realization of the wordless horror of the empty spaces that Newtonian geometrization establishes; on the other, the challenge he posed to any independent existence for God in the wager that he, as the first statistician, could propose, but without even the atheistical Laplace could not

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The holiest place in all creation

Garth Fowden

E. D. Hunt

Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312-460
269pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £16.50.
0 19 826438 0

Of the proposition that travel narrows the mind, there is no better illustration than the history of Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land. For the western visitor it requires a supreme imaginative effort to glimpse Golgotha and the empty tomb behind the Levantine gaudiness of the Church of the Resurrection; while the cosmopolitan communities that guard the holy places continue to this day to expend a considerable part of their energies on political squabbles of a strangely fascinating insignificance. Instead of illuminating spiritual mysteries, the holy places have too often sown discord and bred mutual contempt among the faithful who come from every corner of the earth to worship in them.

But Christians are at least agreed in attributing the holiness of Jerusalem, and Palestine in general, to the fact that it was the scene of Christ's life and death. Like Muslims, who revere Jerusalem as the scene of Muhammad's ascent into heaven, Christians think of the holiness of the holy places as deriving from their association with historical events. In contrast Judaism, the third of the great monotheistic religions that regard Palestine as holy, does so because it is the land promised to Abraham by Yahweh, and therefore *intrinsically* holy.

In the ancient world, both the Jews' monotheism and their obsession with Temple, City and Land marked them apart from other religious traditions; and it was only by detaching belief in the One God from the construction of a narrow Jewish ethnicity that Christ was able to lay the foundations of a universal religion. Christianity emphasized community of spirit, not of race; and in Paul and the evangelist John we see the Temple de-territorialized, personalized in Christ. Jerusalem, the City of David, is metamorphosed into the Jerusalem which is above, which is the Mother of us all, of the Ekklesia of the Galatians, and into the symbolic celestial city, shining with gold and studded with jewels, of Revelation. From the Montanists' removal of the holy city of Phrygia, to Blake's aspiration to build Jerusalem "in England's green and pleasant land", this powerful idea has stuck fast in the Christian mind, countering the natural urge to visit the earthly scene of Christ's life with an assertion that, as Jerome put it, "the heavenly sanctuary is open from Britain no less than from Jerusalem, for the kingdom of God is within you".

But Jerusalem is doubly unique among cities, in that it not only transmits history into symbol, but may also transform myth into history. The early Church, concerned to avoid becoming just another mystery religion, always emphasized the historical roots of its faith; and the pursuit of the historical Jews naturally led to renewed interest in the land where Christ had lived. Three hundred years after the crucifixion, Golgotha and the Tomb were brought once more to light, and adorned with glorious shrines by the Christian emperor Constantine. Even though it is not probable that the memory of these major sites had been preserved intact by the local faithful, there were soon to emerge numerous smaller holy places that owed less to genuine tradition than to the Orientals' celebrated disinclination to let a tourist depart empty-handed. In the story of the Christian holy places, the line between genuine historical reminiscence and historicized myth is never easy to draw. As we descend the scale of historical probability from sites associated with biblical events recorded in the Scriptures, by way of the "Tomb of the Prophet" to the grave of Adam (improbably located), we trace the emergence of Jerusalem as the mythopoietic par excellence.

As a late antique historian, E. D. Hunt is privileged to encounter Jerusalem as it passes through one of its most intensely creative phases. He rightly draws attention to Origen's insistence on the Roman's destruction of Jewish Jerusalem as opening the way to the establishment of the heavenly City presaged by Christ; and to Eusebius of Caesarea's interpretation (echoed in the apse-mosaic of S. Pudenziana in Rome) of Constantine's *Anastasis* basilica as the "new Jerusalem" of the Apocalypse. The Jerusalem monuments were clearly intended, and certainly ideally suited, to play a role of their own in the immense evangelistic and didactic task set itself by the fourth-century Church; and it is with the development of Jerusalem from a holy place of essentially local significance into a spiritual focus for the whole of Christianity that Hunt's book is primarily concerned.

After two introductory chapters on the holy places themselves and the historical and legendary role of Constantine's mother Helena in their establishment, there follow three synthetic chapters describing the gradual evolution of the actual journey to Jerusalem into an integral part of the pilgrimage; the overwhelmingly biblical interests of the pilgrims; and the influential liturgical cycle developed in Jerusalem in response to the same historical, commemorative and biblical pre-occupations that characterized devotion to the holy places themselves. A transitional chapter deals with the increasing dispersion of relics from Jerusalem throughout the whole empire, and the devotion they stimulated; with the growing wealth of the holy places; and with the realities of life in what was still, after all, a Roman *colonia* and military camp as well as the Heavenly City. Then the final, more narrative section of the book discusses the Holy Land involvements of the court of Theodosius I, the ecclesiastical bickerings of the late fourth and earlier fifth centuries (Palladius, Jerome, the Origenist controversy, Pelagianism, the aftermath of Chalcedon), and the beneficent activities of the Empress Eudocia, who did as much for the Christian holy places as anyone after Constantine. The part played by imperial patronage in the evolution of the holy places and the pilgrimage is, as one might expect, one of Hunt's major themes.

This crude and sympathetic first book is a model of critical scholarship applied to a strictly delimited area; and, if a chauvinistic note may be excused, its notes reveal the impressive extent of the contribution that is being

made by the present generation of British scholars to our understanding of the social and religious history of the later Roman empire. But Hunt's success in the descriptive task he has set himself makes one regret all the more the occasional lack of a wider context for his discussion. As a classicist, he confines himself to Greek and Latin sources; but on his own admission the overwhelming majority of Holy Land pilgrims were Orientals, many of them ignorant even of Greek. The modern visitor to Jerusalem during Holy Week quickly senses the contrast of style between Eastern and Western pieties, a contrast echoed in the surprise of the fourth-century Spanish pilgrim Egeria at the "remarkable" displays of tearful emotion in the Good Friday congregation. The Oriental pilgrims were more numerous, and more ordinary, than those who had the leisure and resources to come from further afield. They carried with them their own atmosphere of excited devotion, which was intensified by the self-confidence of the group, just like the pre-revolutionary Russian pilgrims so memorably described in Stephen Graham's *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem*. Recent discoveries of Armenian graffiti in Sinai, first published in 1979 but not referred to by Hunt, are already transforming our understanding of pilgrim-routes in that area; and it may perhaps be that a careful investigation

of the Syriac, Coptic and Armenian literary sources will one day illuminate this neglected oriental aspect of the Holy Land pilgrimage.

Hunt's observation that the new prestige of the Christian Jerusalem is only once mentioned in any pagan source suggests another neglected perspective. Following Jerome, Hunt regards the Christian pilgrims as heirs to the Greek and Roman habit of secular, and often learned, tourism in the manner of Herodotus and Pausanias. Such an analogy, valid perhaps for an Origen or a Eusebius, could have meant nothing to the Syrian peasant or the Mesopotamian monk. But paganism has had an abundance of its own sacred places, and festivals associated with them. Christianity, as a universal and supposedly monolithic religion, necessarily found its holiest shrines – those associated with the life of its founder – concentrated in one corner of the empire; but although much Christian pilgrimage was consequently conducted on an unprecedented geographical scale, it was not different in intention from its more localized pagan antecedents. Indeed, the greatest of pagan shrines, such as Delphi, had been equally capable of attracting visitors from far afield.

There are also interesting analogies between the Christian pilgrimage and the penchant of some of the later Neoplatonists, such as Julian, Proclus

and others among the fifth-century Athenians and Alexandrians, in making extended journeys to the pagan temples and other holy places. And just as Origen treated the Israelites' wanderings in the wilderness of Sinai as an allegory of the soul's search for illumination, so the Neoplatonists interpreted the journey of Odysseus in a similar spirit. It is very likely that these late pagan intellectuals were initiating the Christian pilgrimage; but it does seem that a taste for travelling to holy places was part of the *Zeitgeist*. Recent work on the late antique idea of the holy place, especially associated with the names of Peter Brown and J. Z. Smith – but also argued that in this period the holy place was giving way to the holy man, the focus of popular awareness of the divine. The truth seems to be that all the indisputable prestige of the holy man among both pagans and Christians, men continued to feel the need for a spirit of place in their devotions. Throughout antiquity philosophers and men of religion withdrew to live in temples where they wanted to retreat from the world; and in the new Christian world too the holy man, however mobile, even elusive, life, was encased at his death in a tomb and a pilgrimage-church and became a fixed focus of cult. At Jerusalem he was empty; but his occupant had been the Son of God and his site, Delphi, had become the centre of the earth, the holiest place in all creation.

Sorting out the scraps

Geza Vermes

MAURICE BAILLET (Editor)

Qumran Grotto 4: Volume 3 (4Q482-4Q520)
Discoveries in the Judean Desert 7
420pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £60.
0 19 826321 X

With Volume Seven, *Discoveries in the Judean Desert*, begun in the mid-1950s as a vehicle for the publication of the manuscript fragments found in the Dead Sea caves, completes about a third of its planned twenty or so instalments. The first four volumes, issued between 1955 and 1965, rated as major events in Qumran research; each made a new and notable contribution to learning. Volumes Five and Six, by contrast, leave an impression of *déjà vu*. The same has been said of Maurice Baillet's painstakingly

executed and expert offering, which supplements our understanding of the Dead Sea Scrolls and of the religious community responsible for them to a degree quite disproportionate to its length and price. A considerable amount of the material is composed of minute scraps of text ranging from the insignificant to the meaningless. Indeed, it might seem with hindsight that the person in charge of the whole project should have insisted on evaluating the fragments, giving chronological precedence to those possessing genuine importance.

Of the five sections of the volume, the first (Apocrypha and varia) and the last (Papyrus fragments) include nothing worthy of comment. Section Two comprises six incomplete copies of the *War Rule*, nineteen more or less well preserved columns of which have been known since 1954. Section Three provides a large quantity of liturgical fragments (hymns and prayers) and a collection of badly damaged texts which the editor, perhaps over-

optimistically, believes he can identify as a marriage ritual. The most important items here belong to the "Words of Luminaries", known since 1961 thanks to its partial preliminary publication by Baillet himself, and a composition entitled "Canticle of Sage" in which the author combines praise of God with the explication of the scrolls. Section Four yields two well conserved legal texts dealing with ritual purity.

Maurice Baillet, already renowned for his edition of texts from the caves in Volume Three of the series, confesses to having spent, on and off, eighteen years on preparing this book, and to having had to wait another six years between completing his typescript and its actual publication. He deserves our sympathy. At the same time, he shows himself in his Introduction to be a man with a distinctly limp upper lip, who inclines to grumble about fellow members of the famous "International and interconfessional team" entrusted in 1953-54 with the fragments from Cave 4. Although he was occupied from 1952 on the "ungrateful task" of editing small fragments from Caves 3, and 6-10, he was not admitted into the inner sanctum of Cave 4 until 1958. Even then, Father R. de Vaux, the editor-in-chief, obliged him to accept 2057 scraps of worthless papyrus with none of the others was prepared to touch. Worse still, when one or two kind colleagues took pity on him and transferred to him several interesting pieces, two (anonymous) members of the group tried (unsuccessfully) to obtain some of these. Another complaint is that a named member of the team (J. T. Milik) was guilty of the "savage publication" in a periodical edited by himself of several fragments belonging to Baillet's lot.

The post-1967 Israeli administration of the Rockefeller Museum, with its chemists and physicists and its regulations enforced by a wretched staff, is compared unfavourably with earlier happy-go-lucky days, and one of us who regret the easy time preceding (and following) 1967, finds it scandalous that publication should have been so long delayed. He referred to lightly as "poor" and "glib" deplains long-term "pious" intentions. Declaring himself "impatient for criticism, he tells his readers that he has the satisfaction of feeling that he has put the best of himself into a work written 'avec souffrance, et parfois avec des larmes'. It is not surprising that he was glad to see the end of it. He wrote a *rendre grâces à Dieu, qui lui a fait faire*. This preface to a learned edition of principles in a surprising composition to be across in 1982.

Laurence Lerner

Disturber of the peace

S. N. Plaiçe

THOMAS BERNHARD

Ein Kind
167pp. Salzburg: Residenz.

With the publication of *Ein Kind*, the Austrian novelist and dramatist Thomas Bernhard completes the autobiographical sequence dealing with his early life. Astonishingly, all five volumes cover only his first nineteen years to 1950. Illegitimacy, war-time Salzburg, the Allied bombings, brutal schooling, pleurisy, tuberculosis – it would be hard to imagine a more harrowing sequence of experiences than that which befell Bernhard as a boy. The remorseless awfulness of his youth is relieved by two salutary influences – his sympathetic grandfather and his musical studies. Yet even these two compensations are soon withdrawn: his grandfather dies in the same hospital where he himself is lying dangerously ill, and his weakened lungs prevent him from pursuing the singing career he has aspired to since boyhood.

Die Usache (1975) is divided into two parts, the first describing the authoritarianism of Grünkranz, the pro-Nazi director of the private boarding-school Bernhard attended in war-time Salzburg. The second part describes the replacement after the war of the school's National Socialist ethos by strict Catholicism, when the welfare of the pupils was transferred to the priest Uncle Franz. The portrait of Hitler in the refectory was replaced by the crucifix, Grünkranz's Nazi salute at breakfast by Uncle Franz saying grace. But for Bernhard nothing had altered. The transition from Nazism to Catholicism was effected with no appreciable change in the routine and discipline of the school. He sees the Catholicism of Salzburg as the passive form of Fascism, and continually challenges the myth of the city as a beautiful cultural centre: "the sudden tipping of the scales in favour of National Socialism is possible here at any time".

When Bernhard walks round Salzburg and revisits the locations of the bombings and the air-raid shelters, where he remembers people asphyxiated and dismembered, corpses laid out on the grass, where he himself was rescued along with Grünkranz from under the rubble of the destroyed school, he finds nobody who remembers now. This collective loss of memory is a symptom of what he calls the city's "Catholic-National-Socialist stupidity".

Die Usache, written in deliberately inflammatory and polemical style, did not pass unchallenged. Uncle Franz himself instigated legal proceedings in the Salzburg district court to establish "whether a writer may really go unpunished for lying and insulting", and Bernhard was forced to make excursions in the paperback edition. But in the second volume, *Der Keller* (1976), he steps up his attack on the Salzburg authorities. He describes how at an early age he chose to align himself with the "dregs" of the city, simply went "in the opposite direction", to work in the slum quarter, the Scherzhausersiedlung. The whole motivation of Bernhard's life and work, as he never tires of reiterating, stems from contradiction and opposition, "Gegensatz". The hollowness of his life at school is "immediately" reversed by his new activity and responsibility in the cellar where he is employed as a grocery boy. But suicide is still very much part of the misadventure, a preoccupation which is hardly surprising for an Austrian writer whose home city is Salzburg, Austria.

There cannot be many eighteenth-century writers as important, and even as Karl Philipp Moritz who have had to wait so long for the first collected edition of their writings to be put together. Horst Günther's edition (*Karl Philipp Moritz: Werke*, Three volumes, 2403pp. Insel Verlag 1981, Dfl. 98,-, 3 458 04772 7) is an enterprising and aesthetically and miscellaneously essays, and though not only peripheral matter, it is a living in eighteenth-century

has one of the highest suicide rates in Western Europe and, as an epigraph to *Die Usache*, Bernhard quotes the statistic that two thousand people a year try to kill themselves in the district of Salzburg alone. A tenth of these are successful. "My home city," he concludes in *Der Keller*, "is in reality a deadly disease".

Disease and death are the backdrop to the third and fourth volumes in which the author is shunted through a succession of lugubrious hospitals. In *Der Atem* (1978), he describes his recovery from pleurisy as an act of will. The patient next to him in the cramped bathroom to which patients are removed from the terminal ward in expectation of their imminent death dies, and some heavy wet washing hanging above falls on top of Bernhard – another ten centimetres and it would have fallen on his face and suffocated him. These two events determine his decision to live: "It was up to me whether I went on breathing or not". Yet this affirmation of life is followed by another sequence of disasters. His grandfather dies, and on the same day he suffers a relapse. He only discovers the fact of his grandfather's death several days later, from a newspaper. Transferred to a convalescent home, on the road to recovery, Bernhard contracts TB and is despatched to the sanatorium at Grafenhof.

In Grafenhof, Bernhard's medical history takes a series of almost incredible turns. *Die Kälte* (1981) documents the series of false diagnoses, painful treatments and incompetent mistakes by doctors. He is pronounced positive, then negative

(his mucus bottle has inadvertently been mixed up with that of another patient) then positive again. After nine months he is discharged ostensibly cured, only to be told two days later by another doctor that he has a hole in his lung. This ludicrous sequence of medical blunders reaches a climax in the current scene where Bernhard is obliged to instruct an inexperienced doctor in the method of lifting his pneumo-peritoneum, a device inserted into the thorax to conduct air to his diseased lung. Yet even when describing the excruciating ineptitude of the doctor as he attempts by trial and error to force the syringe through the stomach wall, Bernhard is surely exploiting the ironies of his own suffering for literary effect. It is as if he enjoys presenting reality as a private vendetta against himself.

The last and most straightforward memoir in the sequence, *Ein Kind*, is in fact chronologically the first. It covers Bernhard's earliest years, from his birth in Holland (his mother couldn't face the scandal of bearing an illegitimate child in her own village in Austria) up to the age of thirteen. It opens with an account of his first elated bicycle ride which ends with a broken chain in a thunderstorm miles from home, ominous portents for the future. Bernhard's grandfather, an obscure writer and anarchist philosopher, is the dominant influence of these early years. (The manuscript of his greatest work, Bernhard tells us in an anecdote worthy of Woody Allen, was eaten by a goat.) At the local German primary school Thomas is an Austrian outcast and learns nothing. His real schooling

comes during walks, with his grandfather and the brief happy spells of his childhood are spent with his grandparents in the country. At home, the boy's presence reminds his mother of his father's desertion, and she beats him mercilessly for the slightest transgression. Physical and emotional deprivation are heightened by the general poverty of the 1930s and the brutal tenets of Nazism so despised by his grandfather. Death fascinates him from an early age, but when he sees an Allied bomber shot down, the dismembered remains of the air-crew open his eyes to the grotesqueness of death and war and provide a foretaste of the horrors of Salzburg.

Bernhard deliberately arranges his narrative to present the most disturbing picture of youth he can. The tendency of the sinuous, unparaphrased and unpunctuated prose is towards hyperbole. Huge compound nouns are constructed to describe the hostile intransigence of the institutions that confine him – "institutions-for-the-destruction-of-mind" (schools), "death-production-line" (hospital) – and certain sinister phrases are raised again and again from the text in italics. In horror, in disbelief, almost as if Bernhard supposed that language itself has conspired against him.

At one point in *Der Keller*, Bernhard describes himself as a "disturber of the peace". All his life he has been an irritant and thorn in the side of everyone, from members of his own family to readers of his work. From these books it is easy to see how the course of his early life determined his

subsequent literary policy: to offer disengagement and provocation where readers and audiences look for diversion and entertainment. In recent years, German and Austrian theatre-goers have been subjected to Bernhard's ruthless attacks on their most sacred institutions. They have seen the Salzburger Festspele, Immanuel Kant, and a thinly-disguised ex-Nazi Minister President lambasted in his plays. They are perhaps by now inured to watching popular dramatists foul the nest of German cultural traditions. But the inventive of these volumes is much more persuasive than that of the plays or novels. The provocation lies in the fact that they are autobiographical truth, or as close to the truth as Bernhard feels he can get, since he has no illusions about the possibility of any faithful reproduction of past events. As he states in *Der Keller*:

What I am describing here is the truth and yet it is not the truth, because it cannot be the truth. In all our readings we have never read a sentence of truth, no matter how many books we have read about actual events. Lies are repeatedly presented as truth, the truth is lies et cetera. It's a question of whether we want to lie or tell and write the truth, even if it can never be the truth, never is the truth.

The chain of paradox is extended: this statement itself, like his autobiography as a whole, is not immune from the possibility of falsehood. Yet it is precisely such statements which give these books a personal authenticity which more than compensates for the impossibility of historical truth.

The flight from love

Margaret McHaffie

PETER HÄRTLING

Die dreifache Maria
124pp. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.
3 472 86546 6

Peter Härtling deploys elements from the biography of the nineteenth-century Swabian poet Eduard Mörike to illustrate some of the peculiar dangers which beset the artist, dangers to which he is exposed by a more than usual sensitivity and vulnerability, and which he survives by his ability to transform the turmoil of experience into the tranquillity of poetry. The story spans more than thirty years of Mörike's life, beginning with his adolescence and breaking off in 1851 when he marries Margarethe von Thees. The narrative technique is episodic, but the episodes are well chosen to throw light on Mörike's character and the sources of his poetry.

The story begins with Mörike's flight from the theological seminary in Tübingen to seek refuge with his family in Stuttgart. The flight is precipitated by the news that Maria has arrived in Tübingen in search of him. Härtling skilfully arouses the reader's curiosity about the woman who produces in Mörike a panic which manifests itself as always when he is under emotional stress, in the symptoms of physical illness. Initially Maria is referred to only as someone from whom Mörike flees, someone whom he thinks of as a feminine counterpart to Mozart's Don Giovanni – both of them beings whose destructive charm wreaks havoc in the lives of those who fall under their spell. Härtling heightens suspense by delaying further revelations about Maria Meyer until he has dealt with Mörike's earlier love for his cousin Klärle Neuffer. The relationship with

Klärle displays the timorousness and hesitancy, the distress at his "sinful" thoughts and reluctance to commit himself fully, which appear again in more intense form in his encounter with Maria. As the passion grows from childhood to adolescence, Klärle's feelings cool. In the end, she rejects Mörike, the mediocre student of theology, the would-be poet, and becomes engaged to someone who is theologically sounder, financially better off and far more likely than her cousin to offer her stability and prosperity. Mörike is both relieved and hurt by her rejection of him. Later, as in the case of Maria, the pain of unhappy love becomes the material for poetry.

The central part of the story, however, revolves round the mysterious figure of Maria Meyer. Härtling prefaces the description of the meeting between her and Mörike with an account of the first twenty years of her life. Born in Schaffhausen in 1802 as the eldest illegitimate child of a notorious mother, Maria makes early acquaintance with poverty and

adversity and shows great resourcefulness in dealing with them. She learns to exploit her extraordinary beauty and her remarkable histrionic talents to beguile a succession of benefactor-validators, playing the role of them whichever role seems appropriate. Her inventiveness and audacity are boundless. The people who shelter her remain ignorant of her real origins. She appears to them out of nowhere, stays with them until her hectic restlessness drives her on, and vanishes as mysteriously as she has come. For many years before her meeting with Mörike, she has lived the life of an adventurer and romantic vagabond. When their paths cross in 1823, she is twenty-one, he is nineteen. He is fascinated by her beauty and the aura of mystery which surrounds her; she sees in the "poet" a possibility of release from the violence of her tempestuous nature. Their fleeting encounter culminates in the strange dream-like hours which they and Lohbauer spend in the abandoned pavilion of the overgrown garden, where almost every Romantic cliché is employed to suggest the temptations of

sinfulness and sensuality. Mörike leaves Ludwigsburg next day without seeing Maria and resists her repeated entreaties for them to meet again. In time, he transforms his memories of her into the highly stylized poem and that of the byss in his novel *Maler Nolten*. At this time, she withdraws into the respectable obscurity of married life with the carpenter Kohler.

The narrative is embellished with quotations from Mörike's poems which underline Härtling's basic theme. He also emphasizes how important Mozart was for Mörike. Mozart was the artist to whom he felt most akin and *Don Giovanni* the opera he admired above all others. His veneration for the composer finds expression in his masterly *Kristallnovelle*, *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag*. The fact that Härtling's protagonist is also an artist prompts the reader to compare the two stories. If, in this comparison, *Die dreifache Maria* is seen to fall short of Mörike's wonderfully concentrated novella, it is nevertheless an interesting variant on the familiar theme.

Light on the grey areas

John Neves

MAX VON DER GRÜN

Späte Liebe
173pp. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.

Max von der Grün's latest novella tells the story of a couple in their seventies who decide against all the odds to get married. It makes a happy contrast with a book such as *Flüchenbrand*, in which he recounted the misery of long-term unemployment. But the setting is the same, and so indeed is the *kleinbürgerlich* atmosphere of the Ruhr families who people it. Max von der Grün describes the lives of lower middle class and working class Germans without any romanticism. They are modest people, they work hard, but they are constantly struggling against *Schicksalsschläge* – blows of fate.

In *Späte Liebe*, however, it is almost as if he had awarded himself something of a break from this reality, for the low affair of the widowed Frau Gmeiner and the widower Herr Burger is the

happiest thing that could possibly happen to both. And it happens very quickly. Even von der Grün's fondness for detailed descriptions of *petit bourgeois* homes does not prevent the couple arriving at the point of no return after a couple of meetings or so.

The episode of their excursion to the Rhine in a bus full of pensioners reminds us that von der Grün's books are an acquired taste, in spite of his superficially conventional style. The reader must come to terms with his colourless image of life among the social classes which interest him (and from which he himself springs). He wants us to be aware of Burger's weak heart, which is never going to get any better; of the envy of the couple's friends; of the severely limited nature of their lives, which will continue to restrict their imaginations after they return from their exciting honeymoon in Paris; and of the difficulties involved in getting on with their relatives and friends in the new circumstances.

Life in the environment von der Grün depicts is not only modest and insecure, it is also tough and hard-bitten. Hard words fly at a moment's

notice. People who have conflicting interests are forced to co-operate. What is to become of Gretl's friend Hildegard now that Gretl is marrying again? How will her daughter-in-law, of whom she has never approved, take the news? She even gets involved in a heated argument with her spouse-to-be over the tailor's sewing machine he wants to bring with him into the new household.

Späte Liebe is remarkable, though, for its psychological balance. Von der Grün never loses sight of the good fortune that has befallen his septuagenarian lovers, and shows us how fragile the life of a conventional married couple (that of Gretl's son and daughter-in-law) can be, by comparison. Gretl's grand-daughter Susanne even arrives at the end of the book as a temporary refuge from her parents, who have started to quarrel bitterly as the finances for their new house falls through. Von der Grün's world is full of conflicts; resolution is inevitable, but unexpected and chillingly sudden. The greyness of industrial Westphalia and its underprivileged society have found in Von der Grün a gifted poet.

T. J. Reed